

FULL
68 PAGES

NEW AMAZING STORIES



NO
38

Sinister TALES

1½

IT HAD TO HAPPEN!
SOONER OR LATER,
SPIDER-MAN
WAS BOUND TO BATTLE

"DOCTOR
DOOM!"

THIS IS YOUR *FINISH*,
SPIDER-MAN! IF THE
FANTASTIC FOUR THEMSELVES
COULD NOT STOP ME, WHAT
CHANCE HAVE *YOU*?



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"MARKED FOR DESTRUCTION BY DR. DOOM!"

FEATURING



PETER PARKER
ALIAS
SPIDER-MAN



THE AWESOME
DOCTOR
DOOM!



J. JONAH
JAMESON
AND HIS
SECRETARY,
BETTY BRANT

SPIDER-MAN AND THE ARCH-FOE
OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, FACE-TO-
FACE FOR THE FIRST TIME!



WRITTEN
BY... *Stan Lee*

DRAWN
BY... *S. Ditko*

LETTERING...
S. ROSEN

FEATURING



FLASH
THOMPSON,
LIZ ALLAN,
AND THEIR
ASSORTED
CLASSMATES



THE
OTHER
SPIDER-MAN!



AND THE
WORLD'S MOST
FABULOUS
SUPER-TEAM!

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED, WHEN YOU START READING A COMIC MAG, THE OPENING CAPTION TELLS YOU THAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO READ THE MOST EXCITING STORY EVER WRITTEN... WITH THE MOST DANGEROUS MENACE / AND THE MOST SUSPENSEFUL PLOT?? WELL, WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO BE MORE HONEST / THIS MAY NOT BE THE GREATEST STORY EVER WRITTEN / YOU MAY HAVE READ ABOUT MORE EXCITING VILLAINS / AND YOU MAY HAVE THRILLED TO BETTER PLOTS, BUT Y'KNOW... SOMETHING? WE CAN'T SEE NOW!

YOU ARE LOOKING AT ONE OF THE FEW CANDID ACTION FILMS EVER TAKEN OF SPIDER-MAN BY A NEWSREEL PHOTOGRAPHER!



BY NOW THE WHOLE WORLD KNOWS OF SPIDER-MAN'S EXISTENCE! BUT THE WORLD DOESN'T KNOW HIS TRUE IDENTITY, OR HIS REAL MOTIVES! AND THAT IS WHAT THIS PROGRAM INTENDS TO INVESTIGATE!

SPIDER-MAN...
A FORCE
FOR GOOD
OR EVIL?



MY NAME IS J. JONAH JAMESON, PUBLISHER OF NOW MAGAZINE, AND THE DAILY BUGLE! I AM SPONSORING THIS PROGRAM IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, TO EXPOSE SPIDER-MAN TO THE PUBLIC AS THE MENACE HE IS!



ANY TV SHOW ABOUT THE COLORFUL SPIDER-MAN IS BOUND TO ATTRACT A LARGE AUDIENCE! EVEN TEEN-AGERS IN A LOCAL BOWLING ALLEY INTERRUPT THEIR GAME TO VIEW THE PROGRAM...

BOY, IMAGINE JAMESON SPONSORING HIS OWN PROGRAM, JUST TO ATTACK SPIDER-MAN!

I SAY THAT SPIDER-MAN BELONGS BEHIND BARS!

AW, JAMESON'S NOT SO DUMB! HE'S JUST GETTIN' GOOD PUBLICITY FOR HIS MAG BY MAKING ALL THIS FUSS!

YEAH! PERSONALLY I THINK THAT SPIDER-MAN'S THE COOLEST!



I MUSTN'T SAY ANYTHING TO MAKE THEM SUSPECT ME! I'LL TALK AGAINST SPIDER-MAN!

YOU CAN'T TELL! JAMESON MAY BE RIGHT! NOBODY REALLY KNOWS SPIDER-MAN!

IT'S A CINCH YOU DON'T, PANTY-WAIST! YOU'D PROBABLY FAINT IF YOU EVER CAUGHT SIGHT OF HIM!

I WOULD, TOO! ...FROM SHEER EXCITEMENT! I'LL BET HE'S REAL HANDSOME UNDER THAT SILLY MASK OF HIS!



G'WAN, PARKER, GET LOST! YOU'RE IN THE WRONG PLACE, ANYHOW! THIS IS A BOWLING ALLEY, NOT A KNITTING PARLOR!

THAT'S IT FLASH! KEEP IT UP! ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL GO TOO FAR, AND YOU'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT YOU! THERE'S EVEN A LIMIT TO SPIDER-MAN'S PATIENCE!



BUT, IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN, ANOTHER LISTENER HEARS JAMESON'S PROGRAM, A STRANGE AND SINISTER LISTENER!

MY PAPERS ARE OFFERING A THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD TO ANYONE WHO CAN DISCLOSE SPIDER-MAN'S TRUE IDENTITY!

SPIDER-MAN?? HMM... HE MAY BE JUST THE ONE I'VE BEEN SEEKING!



EACH TIME I ATTACKED THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** IN THE PAST, THEY HAVE FOUGHT ME TO A STAND-STILL! ALONE, I DO NOT SEEM ABLE TO DEFEAT THEM!

BUT WITH ONE SUCH AS **SPIDER-MAN** AT MY SIDE, EVEN THAT ACCURSED QUARTET WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SAVE THEMSELVES FROM MY WRATH!

ORDINARY MEN TREMBLE AT THE MENTION OF MY NAME! THE ENTIRE CIVILIZED WORLD FEARS THE MENACE OF **DOCTOR DOOM**! AND YET, IN ONE RESPECT, I HAVE BEEN FOILED TIME AND TIME AGAIN!

NO MATTER HOW PERFECTLY I LAY MY PLANS, THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** HAVE ALWAYS MANAGED TO FRUSTRATE ME! I STILL REMEMBER OUR LAST PARTING...

COME BACK! YA CAN'T CHEAT ME OUT OF MY REVENGE THIS WAY!

BEN, GET OUT OF THE WAY! I CAN STILL REACH OUT AND GRAB HIM! BEN... NO! IT'S TOO LATE NOW!

SWIFTLY, SILENTLY, THE AWESOME FORM OF THE GREATEST MENACE OF OUR AGE PLUMMETS EARTHWARD... DOWN... DOWN... DOWN... UNTIL IT IS LOST FROM SIGHT IN THE BILLING CLOUDS BELOW...



ONCE UNDER COVER OF THE CLOUDS, THE JET-POWERED FLYING BELT I WORE ENABLED ME TO GLIDE TO SAFETY... TO REPAIR TO A NEW LAIR, WHERE I COULD LICK MY WOUNDS LIKE A VANQUISHED BEAST!

BUT NOW, THAT IS ALL BEHIND ME! NOW IT IS TIME TO STRIKE AGAIN! WITH THE AID OF THAT IMPRISONED SPIDER, I WILL TRANSMIT A MESSAGE TO **SPIDER-MAN**, USING HIS OWN WAVE-LENGTH!

IN SOME STRANGE WAY, HE HAS THE SENSORY POWERS OF A SPIDER... AND SO IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER FOR ONE OF MY GENIUS TO CREATE THIS SPIDER-WAVE TRANSMITTER!

CALLING **SPIDER-MAN**! CALLING **SPIDER-MAN**! I MUST CONTACT YOU AT ONCE!



MEANWHILE, AT HOME, PETER PARKER PRACTICES HIS AGILITY WITH HIS WEB, IN THE PRIVACY OF HIS ROOM...

IF THE GANG AT THE BOWLING ALLEY COULD SEE ME NOW!



CALLING SPIDER-MAN! CALLING SPIDER-MAN!

I CAN SENSE A MESSAGE! SOMEONE IS TRYING TO REACH ME!



WHO CAN IT BE? HOW COULD ANYONE HAVE FIGURED OUT A WAY TO REACH ME THROUGH MY SPIDER'S SENSE?

WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT!



IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER FOR ME TO FOLLOW THE SENSORY IMPULSES TO THEIR SOURCE! BOY, IT'S GREAT TO BE GETTING BACK INTO ACTION AGAIN!



BUT, PERHAPS SPIDER-MAN WOULD NOT BE QUITE SO ENTHUSIASTIC IF HE KNEW WHO WAS WAITING FOR HIM AT HIS ULTIMATE DESTINATION!

IT SHOULD BE CHILD'S PLAY FOR ME TO PERSUADE SPIDER-MAN TO JOIN ME AGAINST THE FANTASTIC FOUR!



WELL, I GUESS THIS IS THE PLACE! NOW TO... HOLY SMOKE! I'D KNOW THAT GUY ANYWHERE! IT...IT'S DOCTOR DOOM!



SO IT WAS YOU WHO TRIED TO CONTACT ME, DOOM?! IT WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE SOMEONE WITH YOUR TALENT! BUT WHY?

AH, SPIDER-MAN! IS IT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO MAKE YOUR ENTRANCE QUITE SO DRAMATIC, MY IMPETUOUS FRIEND?





MISTER, FROM WHAT I'VE READ ABOUT YOU, YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANY FRIENDS... IMPETUOUS OR OTHERWISE!

FRIENDSHIP IS FOR WEAKLINGS! WHAT I OFFER YOU IS **POWER!** TOGETHER, WE COULD RULE THE WORLD!



YOU'RE AN OUTCAST, THE SAME AS I! YOU DARE NOT REVEAL YOUR TRUE IDENTITY! AND YET, RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE, THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** BASKS IN THE LIMELIGHT, WHILE YOU ARE SHUNNED AND HUNTED!

I'LL APPEAL TO HIS SENSE OF ENVY... OF PRIDE! THEN, ONCE HE HAS SERVED HIS PURPOSE, I'LL DESTROY HIM WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT!



ME TEAM UP WITH YOU, HUH? MAN, WOULDN'T THAT BE A GASSER? JONAH JAMESON WOULD **REALLY** HAVE SOMETHING TO HOWL ABOUT THEN!

AN, SO YOU WILL DO IT! SPEAK!! GIVE ME YOUR WORD!



NOT SO FAST, TIN-HEAD! SURE, IT'S AN AMUSIN' THOUGHT TO KICK AROUND, BUT JUST BETWEEN US, I NEED YOU LIKE I NEED ANOTHER NOSE! THE ANSWER IS **NO, BUSTER!**

I WARN YOU... IF YOU ARE NOT WITH ME, THEN WE ARE DEADLY **FOES!**



DOC, YOU'RE SCARIN' ME PLUMB OUT OF MY WITS! HERE, CHEW ON THIS HUNK OF **WEB** FOR A WHILE!



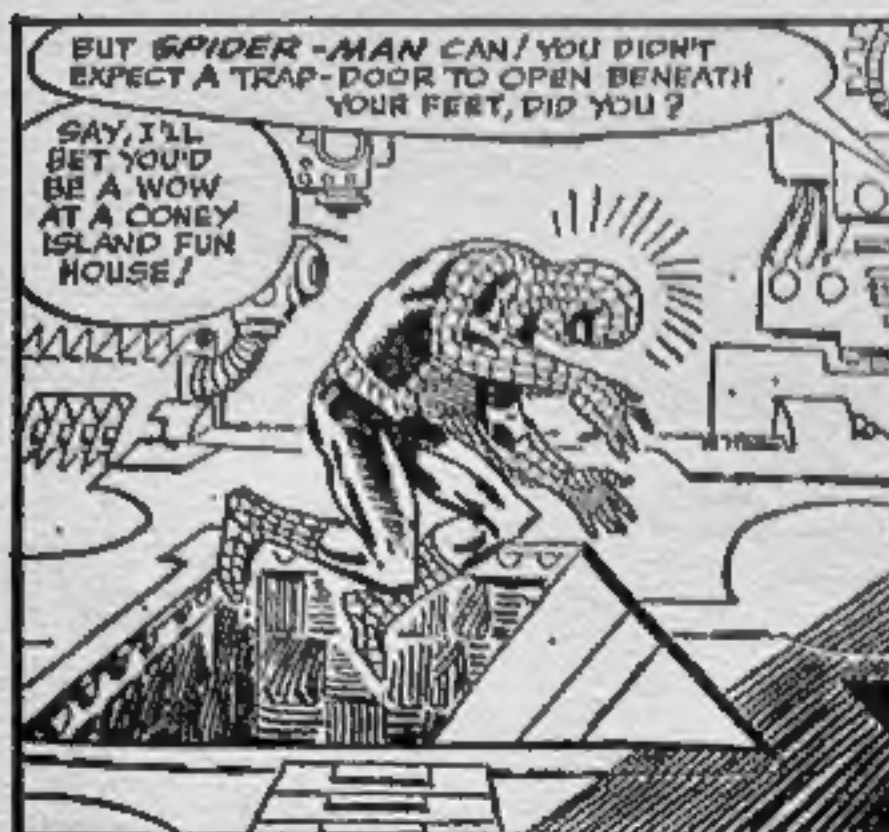
THAT'LL KEEP YOU UNDER WRAPS WHILE I FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH YOU! SAY, HOW COME YOU'RE SO QUIET... SO STILL? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

YOU BRAZEN FOOL! HAVEN'T YOU **GUESSED** YET?



IT WASN'T YOU AT ALL! JUST A ROBOT... A DUMMY MADE UP TO RESEMBLE THE **REAL DOCTOR DOOM!**

NATURALLY! YOU ARE NOT FIGHTING ONE OF YOUR USUAL INSIPID ANTAGONISTS NOW, SPIDER-MAN! **DOCTOR DOOM** CANNOT BE TRAPPED SO EASILY!



BUT SPIDER-MAN CAN! YOU DIDN'T EXPECT A TRAP-DOOR TO OPEN BENEATH YOUR FEET, DID YOU?

SAY, I'LL BET YOU'D BE A WOW AT A CONEY ISLAND FUN HOUSE!



YOU DON'T THINK A FELLER WITH THE REFLEXES OF A SPIDER IS GONNA TUMBLE DOWN A CONNY TRAP-DOOR, DO YOU?

PERHAPS NOT... BUT FOR YOUR SAKE, I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK YOU'VE ESCAPED ME ALREADY!



THE ACCIDENT WHICH YEARS AGO MADE A SHAMBLES OF MY FACE DIDN'T AFFECT MY STRENGTH AT ALL... AS YOU CAN SEE!

OOOF!



AND I AM NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT LITTLE WEAPONS OF MY OWN... SUCH AS THIS MOST EFFECTIVE MINIATURE FINGER-GUN!

NICE TRY, RATTLE-TRAP! BUT I SAW THAT COMING SECONDS AGO!



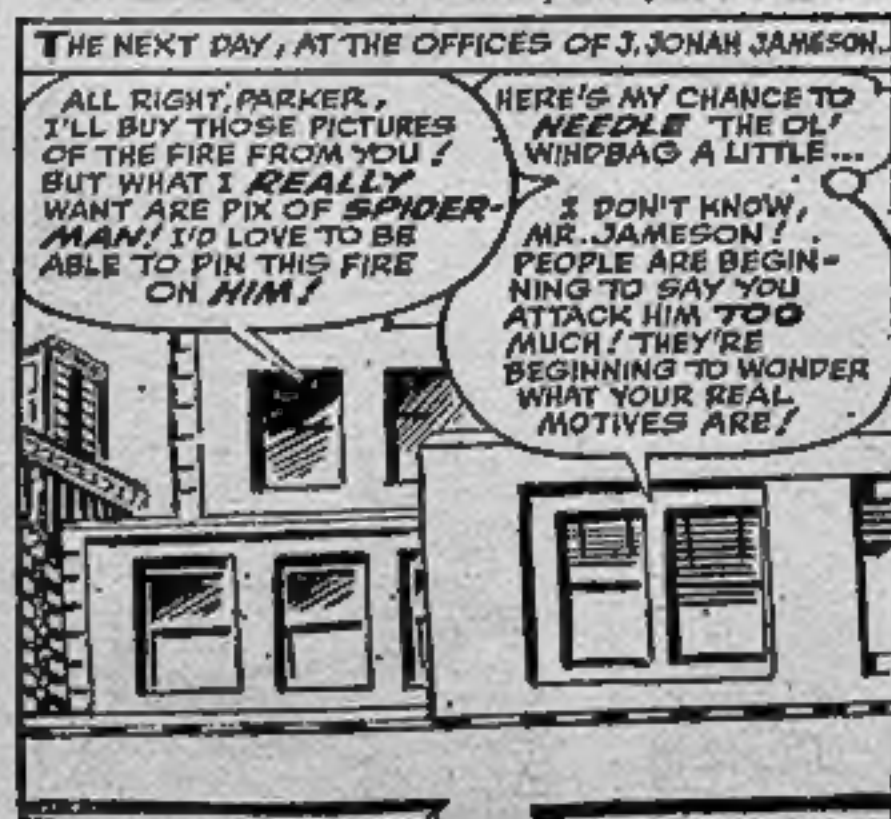
I'LL SAY "SO LONG" FOR NOW, DOC! I DON'T MAKE A HABIT OF BEING A HUMAN TARGET FOR BIG BAD VILLAINS!

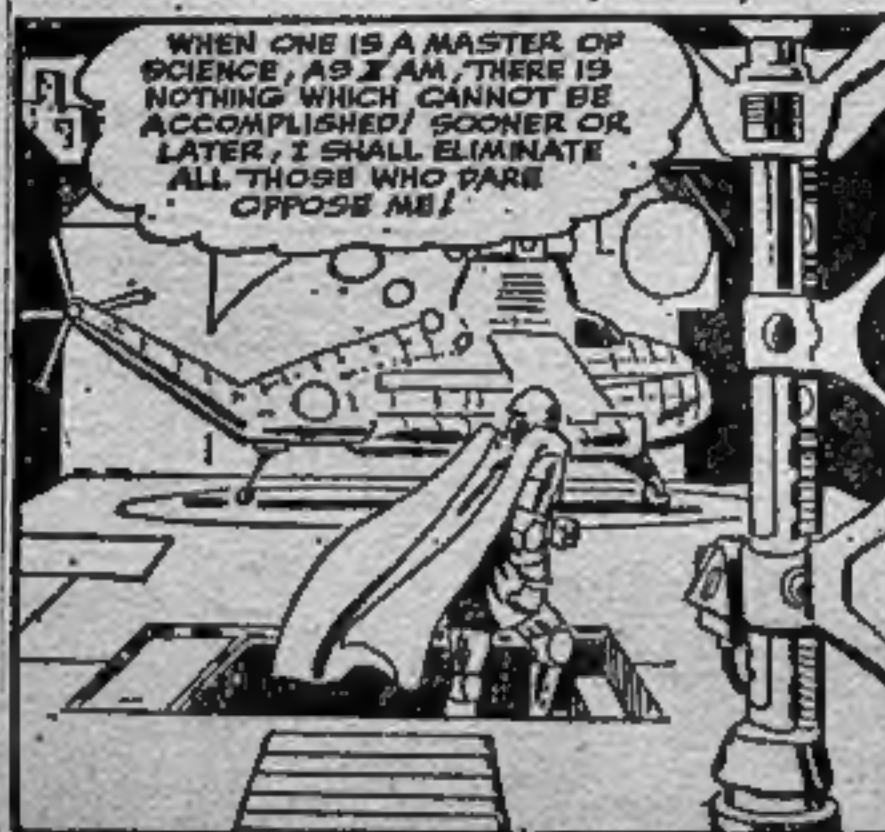


IF I TWIST AND TURN JUST THE RIGHT WAY, I'LL MISS THE LEDGE BELOW AND LAND SAFELY IN THE WATER! LOOKS LIKE MY HOURS OF AGILITY PRACTICE ARE REALLY PAYING OFF!



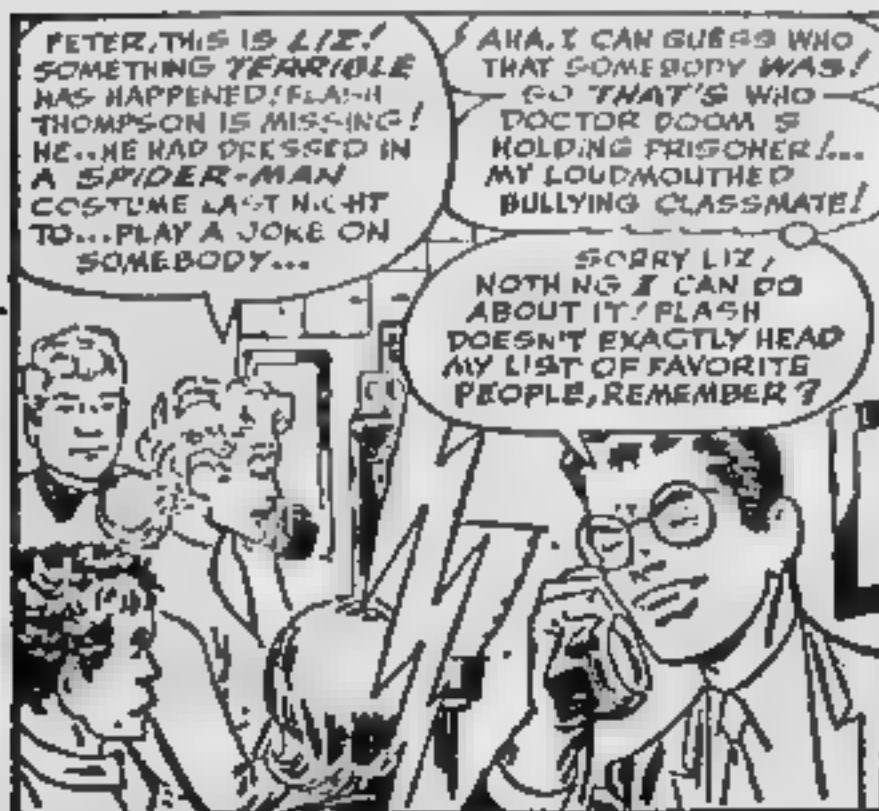
HE ESCAPED ME! WELL, I'LL LET HIM GO FOR NOW! BUT HE SHALL STILL SERVE MY PURPOSE... ONLY, IN A WAY HE CANNOT POSSIBLY SUSPECT!











PETER, THIS IS LIZ! SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED! FLASH THOMPSON IS MISSING! HE... HE HAD DRESSED IN A SPIDER-MAN COSTUME LAST NIGHT TO... PLAY A JOKE ON SOMEBODY...

AHA, I CAN GUESS WHO THAT SOMEBODY WAS! GO THAT'S WHO DOCTOR DOOM IS HOLDING PRISONER!... MY LOUDMOUTHED BULLYING CLASSMATE!

SORRY LIZ, NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT! FLASH DOESN'T EXACTLY HEAD MY LIST OF FAVORITE PEOPLE, REMEMBER?



WHAT A BREAK FOR ME! THE FF WILL NEVER AGREE TO DOOM'S TERMS, SO ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP OUT OF IT, AND FLASH THOMPSON WILL NEVER BOTHER PETER PARKER AGAIN! THINGS ARE FINALLY GOING MY WAY!

AWWW, WHAT AM I THINKING? WHO AM I KIDDING? I COULD NO MORE SIT BACK AND LET ANY HARM COME TO THE CITY, THAN I COULD SWIM TO THE MOON! THE REAL SPIDER-MAN WILL HAVE TO GO INTO ACTION AGAIN!



SEE YOU LATER, AUNT MAY! I HAVE TO...UH...GO OUT ON AN ERRAND!

OH, PETER...NO! YOU MUSTN'T! NOT TONIGHT!



I ABSOLUTELY FORBID IT! YOU'RE STILL JUST A BOY! AND, WITH ALL THOSE TERRIBLE PEOPLE ROAMING THE CITY... DOCTOR DOOM, SPIDER-MAN, AND HEAVEN KNOWS WHO ELSE... I WANT YOU HOME WHERE IT'S SAFE!

OKAY, AUNT MAY! YOU KNOW THE DOCTOR SAID YOU MUSTN'T WORRY!

SOME SUPER-HERO I AM! I'VE GOT TO FIND SOME WAY TO GET MY AUNT TO LET ME OUT OF THE HOUSE!



I'LL JUST GO DOWN HERE AND MAKE SURE THE CELLAR WINDOWS ARE LOCKED, AUNT MAY!

HATE TO DO THIS, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY! IF I REMOVE THE MASTER FUSE...



THERE! THE HOUSE IS PLUNGED IN DARKNESS! OF COURSE, BY USING MY SPIDER SENSE, IT'S EASY FOR ME TO FIND MY WAY AROUND WITHOUT LIGHT!



OH, PETER, THE LIGHTS WENT OUT! WE MUST HAVE BLOWN A FUSE! AND THERE AREN'T ANY MORE IN THE HOUSE!

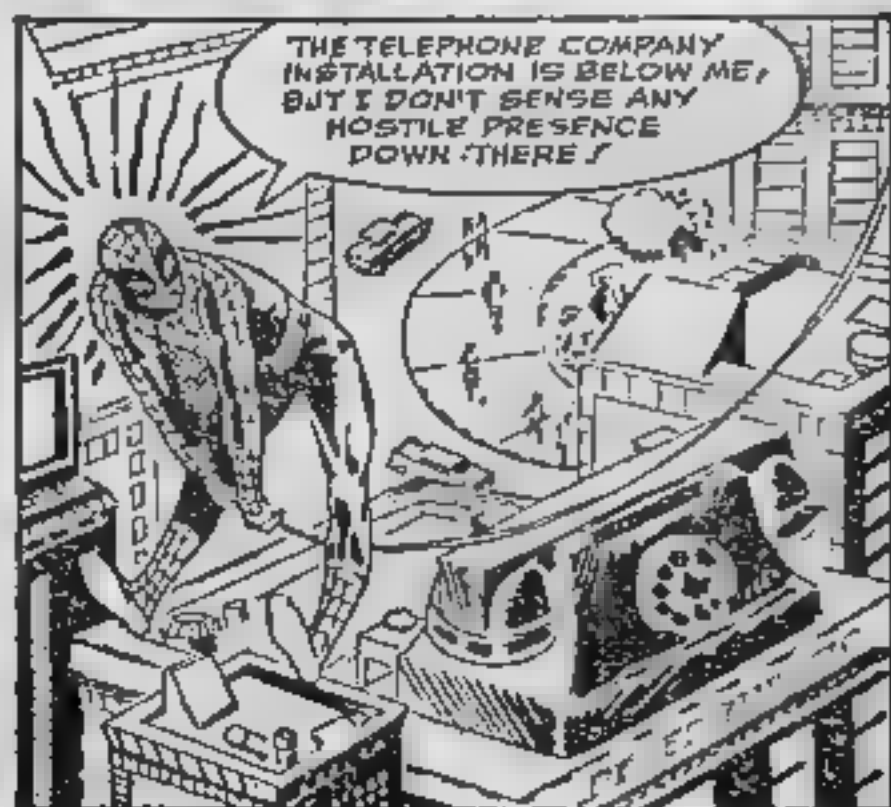
I KNOW! NOW I'LL HAVE TO GO OUT TO GET SOME NEW ONES!

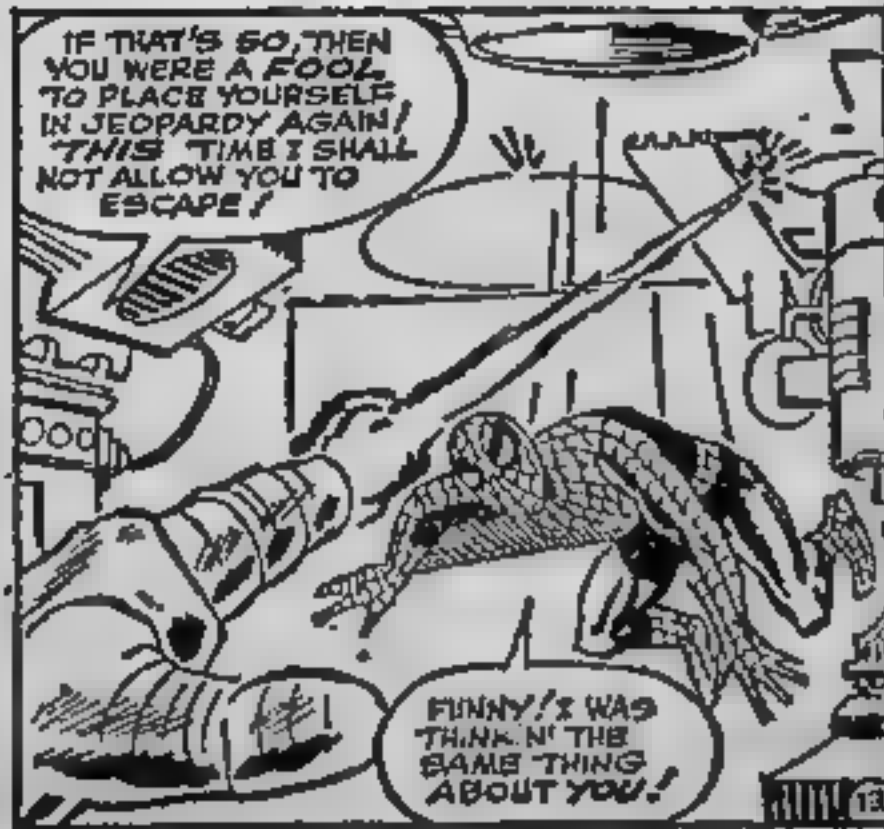
BUT PLEASE BE CAREFUL, DEAR... AND HURRY RIGHT BACK!

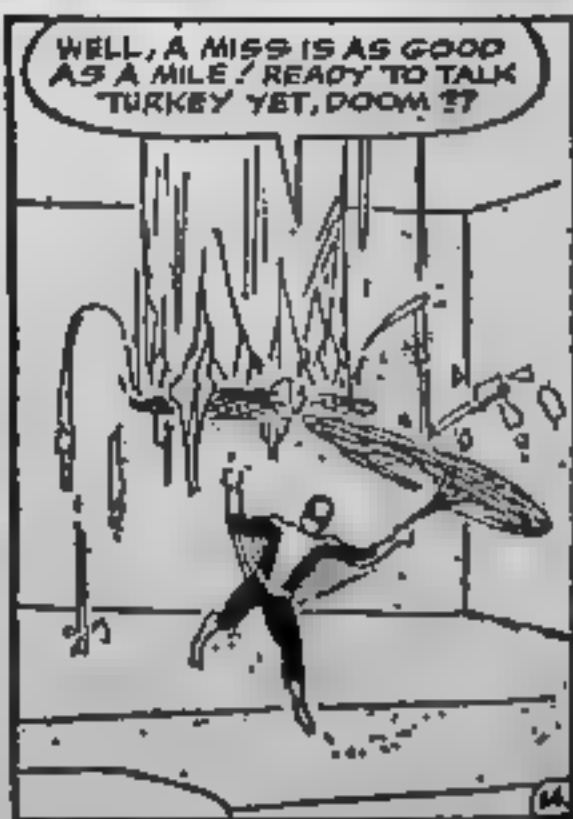
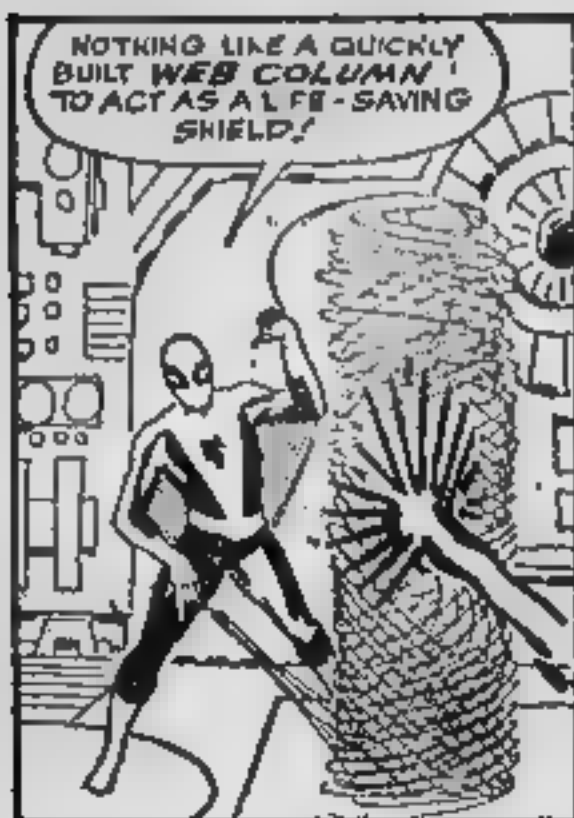


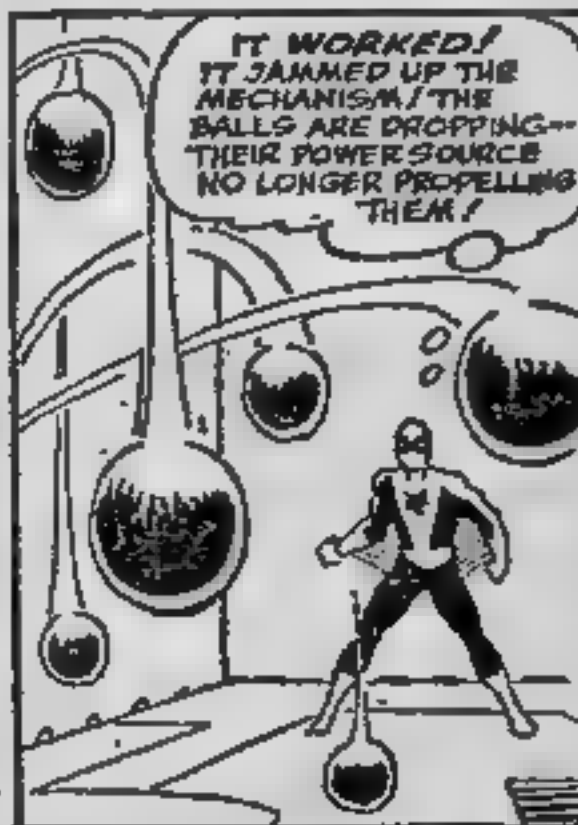
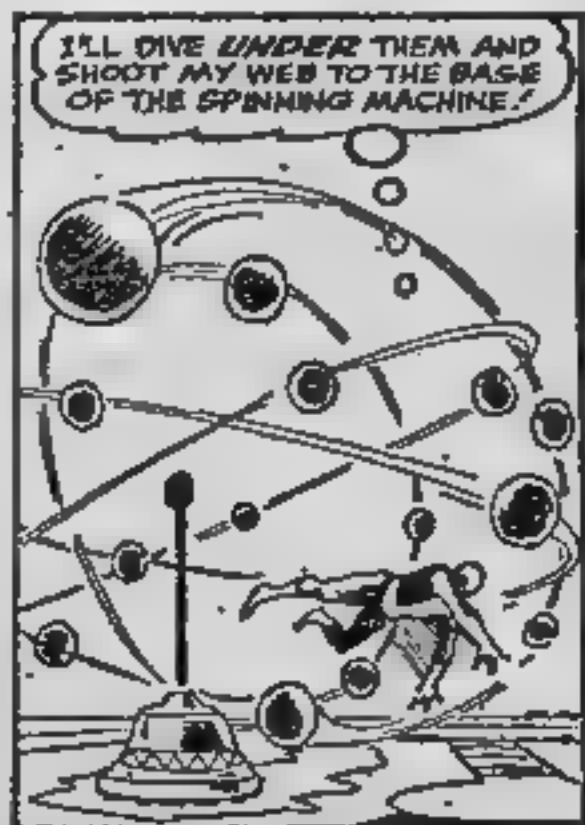
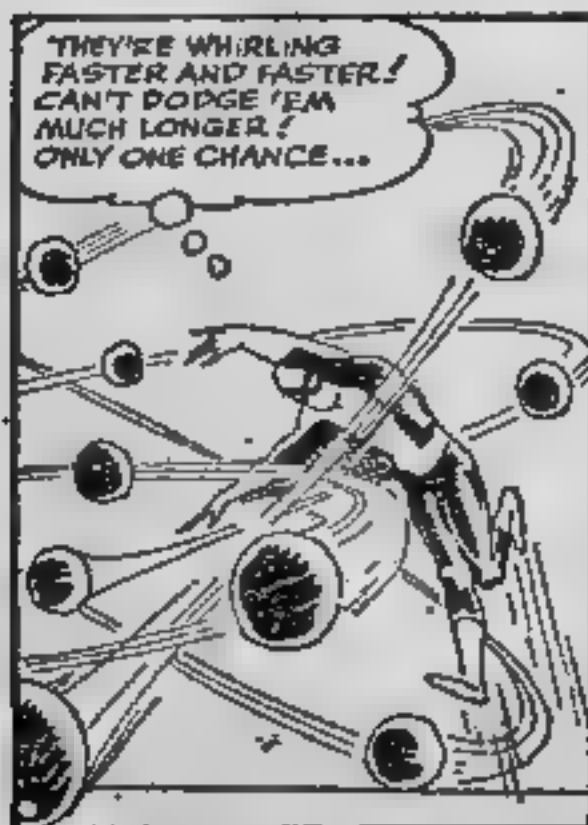
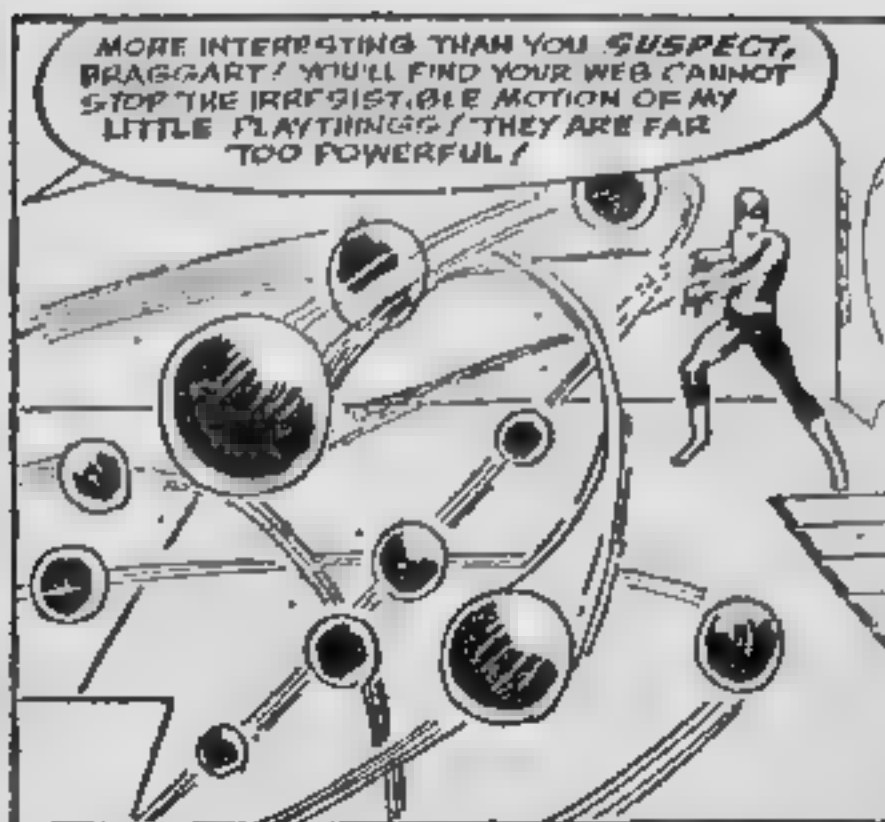
SECONDS LATER...

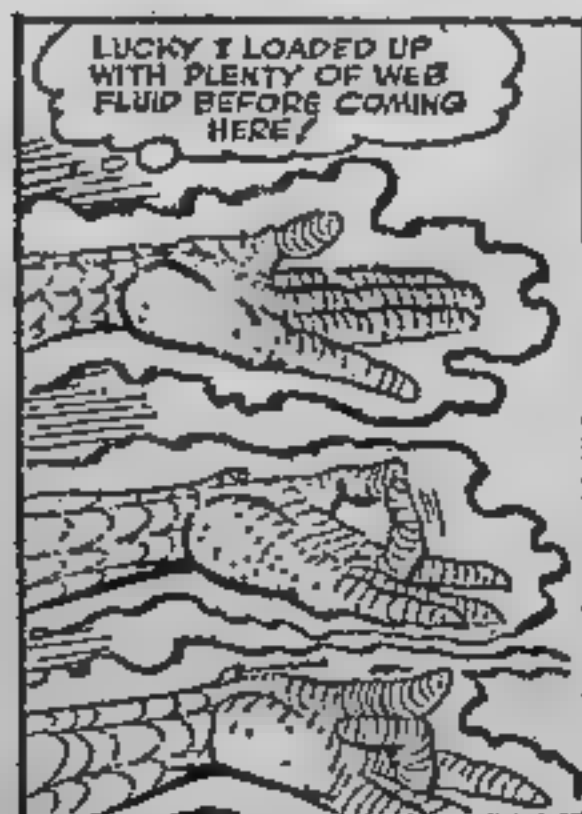
I CERTAINLY HATE TO DECEIVE AUNT MAY, BLESS HER! BUT THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY! A TEEN-AGER'S LIFE IS AT STAKE, SO I HAD NO CHOICE!





















VOODOO and DR. JAMES!

FOR 20 YEARS YOU HAVE MOCKED MY POWER---TRIED TO DESTROY MY HOLD OVER MY PEOPLE! NOW YOU SHALL FEEL MY WRATH! BEWARE DR. JAMES--- FOR WITHIN THREE DAYS YOU SHALL PAY THE SUPREME PRICE!

ONCE, LONG BEFORE, I'D HAVE LAUGHED IN MERE KARANA'S FACE! I WOULD HAVE WALKED FROM HER CABIN ON THE EDGE OF THE SWAMP WITH MY HEAD HIGH---CONFIDENT SHE COULDN'T HARM ME! BUT MUCH HAD HAPPENED DURING MY 20 YEARS IN HAITI---AND NOW I KNEW I WAS DOOMED!

I WAS A YOUNG 'IDEALISTIC' DOCTOR WHEN I FIRST SAW THE SHORES OF THAT ANCIENT ISLAND IN THE CAR BBEAN---

SO THAT'S HAITI? HADN'T EXPECTED IT TO LOOK SO MODERN!

IT'S CIVILIZED ON THE COAST, ALL RIGHT--- BUT WAIT TILL YOU GET INTO THE INTERIOR!

I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE PLEASED WITH THE ASSIGNMENT THE ISLAND HEALTH SERVICE HAD WRITING---

YOU'RE TO SET UP A HOSPITAL HERE---IN THE INTERIOR! DISEASE WILL BE JUST ONE OF YOUR PROBLEMS---

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

I STILL REMEMBER THE CURIOUSLY GRAM TONE OF HIS VOICE AND HOW IDIOTIC I THOUGHT HIS WARNING--

THESE NATIVES ARE RIDDLED WITH SUPERSTITION! THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE IN THE INTERIOR IS VODOO AND I ADVISE YOU TO RESPECT IT!

OF COURSE SIR I UNDERSTAND!



BUT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND--NOT AT ALL! THE JOURNEY TO THE INTERIOR WAS LONG--

TWO DAYS MORE WE BE THERE! WHITE MAN MEDIC WE MUCH WELCOME!

JUST GIVE ME A YEAR OR TWO TO WORK AND EVERY-THING WILL BE ENHANCED!



I WAS YOUNG, TIRELESS AND WELL TRAINED! BEFORE LONG, I'D WON THE CONFIDENCE OF THE NATIVES--

BOY SICK--BIG FEVER! YOU CAN SAVE HIM, DR. JAMES!

I'LL DO MY BEST, TOKIRA!



I COULDN'T HELP BEING PROUD OF MY KNOWLEDGE PROUD OF THE MODERN SCIENCE I HAD BROUGHT INTO THEIR LIVES--

THE BOY WILL LIVE! MY MEDICINE HAS DESTROYED THE FEVER!

WE SHALL HAVE A GREAT FEAST--TO HONOR YOU!



THEY BROUGHT ME THEIR AILMENTS AND THEIR PROBLEMS--THEY'D ACCEPTED ME COMPLETELY I THOUGHT! BUT SOON AFTERWARDS--

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY THE CROWD OUTSIDE THE HUT?

OLD M CHIEF IS WASTING AWAY!



I DIDN'T KNOW THE AWFUL MEANING OF THOSE WORDS--"WASTING AWAY"! HASTILY I ENTERED, ANGRY THAT I HADN'T BEEN CONSULTED--

WHY WASN'T HE BROUGHT TO ME? AM I NOT A DOCTOR?

NO ONE CAN HELP HIM! HE HAS OFFENDED MERE KARANA!



I EXAMINED THE MAN CAREFULLY--UNABLE TO FIND ANYTHING ORGANICALLY WRONG WITH HIM! BUT YET HE WAS PERISHING--

WHO IS MERE KARANA? WHAT DOES SHE HAVE TO DO WITH THIS?

MERE KARANA POSSESSES THE ARTS OF VODOO! IT IS SHE WHO HAS CAUSED HIM TO WASTE AWAY!



I WAS HELPLESS AGAINST OLD MCHUI'S AFFLICTION...
WITHIN HOURS HE WAS GONE! I DECIDED TO VISIT MERE
KARANA AT ONCE...



UNTIL I CAN LICK
VOODOO, MY WORK
HERE IS A FAILURE!
I'M GOING TO FIND
OUT HOW IT WORKS
--FROM HER!

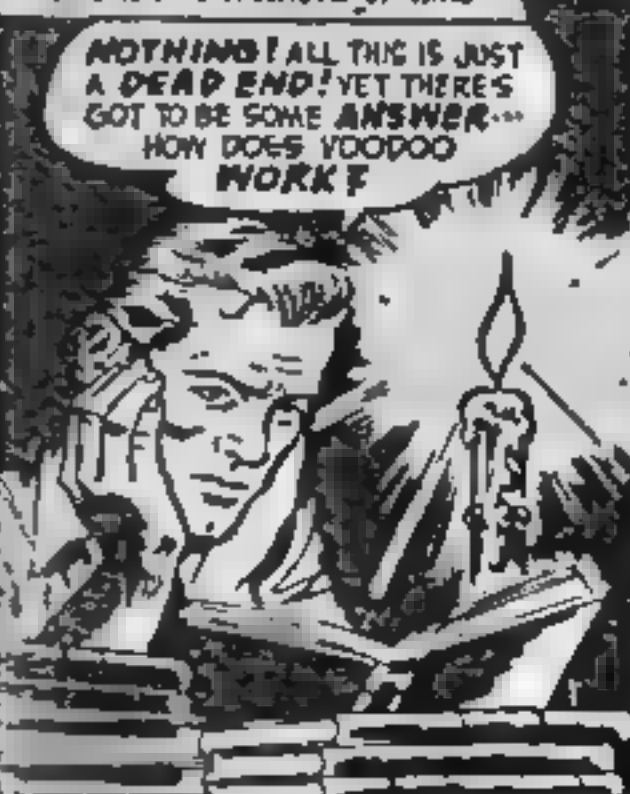
HER APPEARANCE STARTLED ME--I'D NEVER SEEN SUCH AN
OLD PERSON! I CAME TO THE POINT, AND MET ONLY COLD
HOSTILITY...



I SHALL TELL YOU
NOTHING! I ADVISE
YOU TO LEAVE MY
PEOPLE IN PEACE
--LEST I WREAK
VENGEANCE ON
YOU!

YOU CAN'T HARM ME! BEFORE
I'M DONE, THERE'LL BE NO
MORE SUPERSTITION
IN THIS JUNGLE!

I SENT TO THE COAST FOR EVERYTHING
AVAILABLE ON THE SUBJECT OF VODOO
-- BUT IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME...



NOTHING! ALL THIS IS JUST
A DEAD END! YET THERE'S
GOT TO BE SOME ANSWER...
HOW DOES VODOO
WORK?

I THOUGHT BACK THEN TO ALL THE OTHER
STRANGE MYSTERIES OF MEDICINE I'D
OBSERVED DURING MY MEDICAL STUDIES...



NOW THAT THE SUBJECT IS
HYPNOTIZED, I CAN PILE
500 POUNDS ON HIS
MIDSECTION! SUSPENDED
ONLY BY THE TIP OF HIS
HEAD AND HIS HEELS...
HE CAN SUPPORT
THE WEIGHT!

FANTASTIC!

THAT LECTURE MADE A PROFOUND
IMPRESSION ON ME...



YES, GENTLEMEN, IF YOU TELL A
HYPNOTIZED MAN HE'S JUST
BEEN BURNED, A WELT CAN
APPEAR... IF YOU TELL HIM
HE'S BEEN CUT HE MAY
ACTUALLY BLEED! WHY
THIS SHOULD BE SO,
NOBODY KNOWS!

BUT NOBODY UNDERSTOOD VODOO EITHER! THE
YEARS PASSED SLOWLY... TIME AND AGAIN I SAW THE
IMPOSSIBLE HAPPEN...



MERE KARANA HAS
SAID I SHALL WASTE
AWAY! SAVE
ME DOCTOR!

YOU'RE IN
PERFECT
HEALTH CHEKI!
--DON'T BELIEVE
HER!

BUT I COULD NOT SAVE CHEKI, NOR ANY OF THE OTHERS!
20 YEARS HAD PASSED, AND I KNEW IN MY HEART THAT
VOODOO WAS STRONGER THAN I...



YOU NO LONGER
SOUFF AT MERE
KARANA--FOR YOU
KNOW WHAT SHE
IS!

HE'S RIGHT...
I FEAR HER
MYSELF
NOW!

SINCE I COULD NOT DEFEAT HER I DECIDED TO ASK HER MERCY FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE JUNGLE! 20 YEARS HAD GONE BY, AND YET THIS INCREDIBLY OLD WOMAN WAS STILL WISDOMFUL...

NO, I WILL NOT HELP YOU! YOU HAVE MOCKED ME AND YOUR TIME HAS COME! NOW YOU SHALL WASTE AWAY!

AN-MET YOU'RE GOING TO ATTACK ME?

WHY HAD SHE WAITED 20 YEARS TO DESTROY ME? I WONDERED! BY NIGHTFALL, I WAS TOO WEAK TO STAND... A DOCTOR HAD FLOWN IN FROM THE COAST...

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH YOU, MAN... NOTHING!

I AM WASTING AMMY DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? WITHIN 72 HOURS, I WILL BE GONE!

FOR THE NATIVES, THIS WAS THE SUPREME BATTLE... MY MAGIC AGAINST MERE KARANA'S, AND SHE WAS WINNING! I COULD HARDLY SPEAK WHEN A GLIMMER OF HOPE FILTERED INTO MY BRAIN...

DOCTOR - CAN YOU HYPNOTIZE ME...?

WHY, YES... OF COURSE! BUT WHY?

DO SO! - WHEN I'M HYPNOTIZED, TELL ME I SHALL RECOVER... THAT SHE CAN'T HARM ME - IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE...

ALL RIGHT! ANYTHING IS WORTH TRYING!

AS THE NATIVES LOOKED ON WITH SUPERSTITIOUS AMAZEMENT...

YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT! YOU'RE HEALTHY VIGOROUS... IN FIVE MINUTES YOU'LL ARISE FROM THIS BED CURED!

I - AM HEALTHY... VIGOROUS SHE CAN'T HARM ME...

THE YOUNG DOCTOR SNAPPED HIS FINGERS... THE SPELL WAS BROKEN! BUT THE IDEA HE'D IMPLANTED IN MY BRAIN WAS WORKING... I FELT STRONG AND FULL OF VITALITY...

I - I FEEL FINE! I'M NO LONGER WASTING AWAY!

MERE KARANA IS DEATEN! HURRY! WE MUST TELL THE PEOPLE!

THE NEWS SPREAD THROUGH THE VILLAGE LIKE WILDFIRE! I ADDRESSED THE WHOLE TRIBE...

HEAR ME, MY PEOPLE... MY MAGIC IS STRONGER THAN MERE! YOU HAVE SEEN... AND MUST BELIEVE! SHOULD ANY OF YOU FALL ILL, COME TO ME AND YOU SHALL BE CURED!

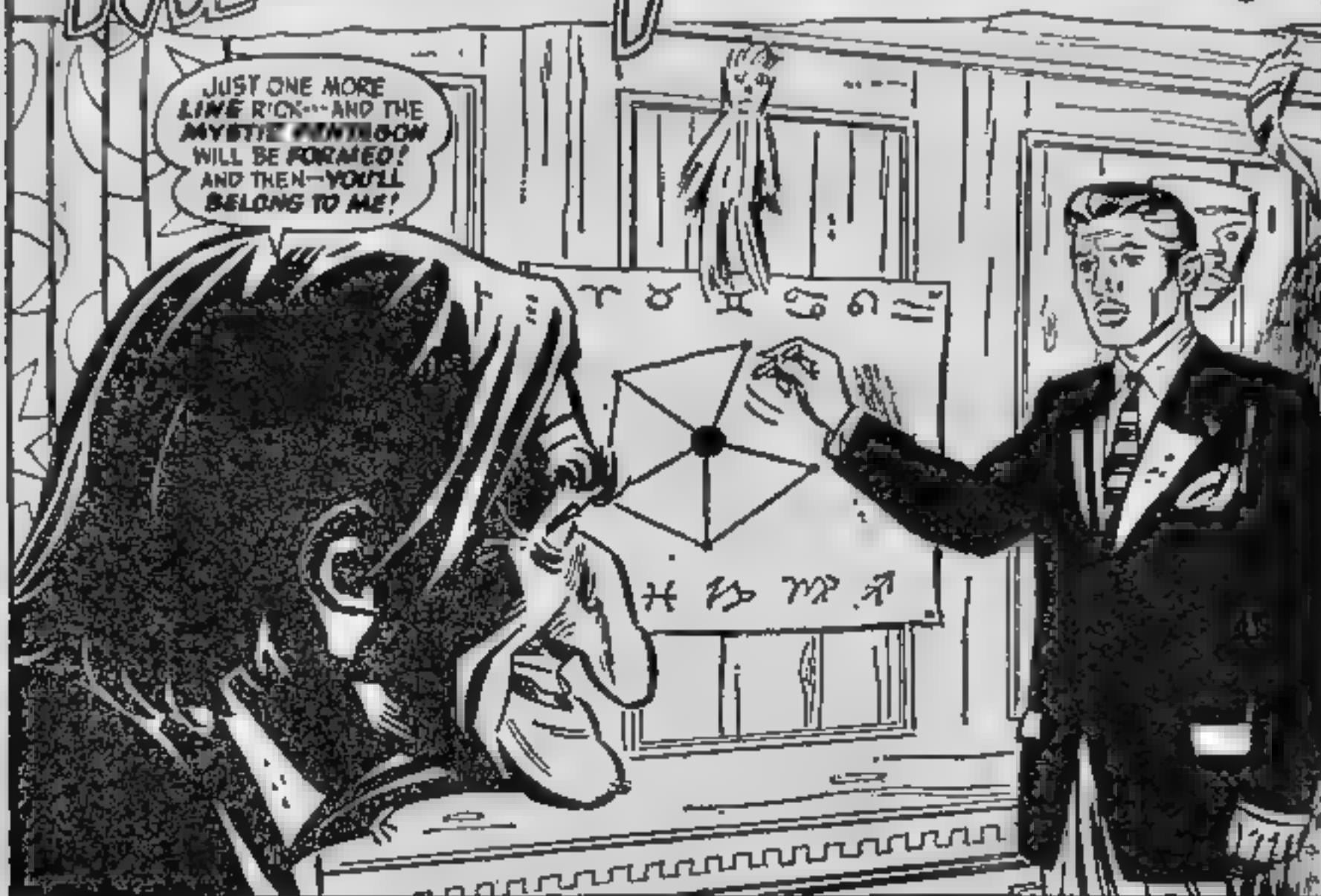
MERE KARANA PASSED AWAY SOON AFTERWARDS, HER POWER OVER THE PEOPLE BROKEN AT LAST! I WAS SUMMONED TO THE COAST TO EXPLAIN...

IT'S QUITE SIMPLE! VODOO WORKS BECAUSE PEOPLE BELIEVE IN IT! LIKE THE HYPNOTIZED MAN WHO'LL BLEED IF MERELY TOLD HE'S CUT, SO CAN A MAN DIE IF HE BELIEVES IN VODOO'S POWER! BUT NOW I KNOW HOW TO FIGHT IT!

THAT'S WHY HE WANT YOU HERE! FROM NOW ON, YOU'RE OUR TROUBLE-SHOOTER! WHEREVER VODOO EXISTS, YOU'LL BE SENT - UNTIL IT'S STAMPED OUT ON THIS ISLAND ONCE AND FOR ALL!

IN ANCIENT TIMES, MANY MATHEMATICIANS WERE OFTEN CONSIDERED STUDENTS OF THE OCCULT! NUMBERS, SIGNS, SYMBOLS-- ALL WERE THOUGHT TO HAVE MAGICAL PROPERTIES! DOWN THE AGES MEN HAVE DELVED INTO THESE DARK MYSTERIES, HOPING MOST OF ALL TO SOLVE THE SECRET OF--

MYSTIC PENTAGON!



THE SHINDLER RICK HARRIS WAS JUST COMPLETING HIS THIRD PRISON SENTENCE--

ONE MORE RAP HARRIS, AND YOU'LL BE PUT AWAY FOR KEEPS-- AS A "FOUR-TIME LOSER"! YOU'RE YOUNG ENOUGH TO START A NEW LIFE-- AND SMART ENOUGH TO MAKE SOMETHING OF YOURSELF!

FORGET THE ADVICE, WARDEN!

JUST OUTSIDE, MEMBERS OF HIS OLD MOB WERE WAITING FOR HIM--

NICE TO HAVE YOU OUT AGAIN, BOSS!

IT'LL BE JUST LIKE OLD TIMES-- WITH EASY PICKINGS!



BUT WHILE THE OTHERS SPOKE OF NEW DEALS AND SMART ANGLES, RICK BROODED...

I CAN'T TAKE A CHANCE OF BRUSHING UP WITH THE LAW AGAIN! WHAT CAN I DO? I'VE GOT NO PROFESSION, NO WAY TO MAKE A LIVING AND MONEY'S THE ONE THING THAT COUNTS MOST WITH ME!

HE LEFT HIS HENCHMEN IN THE CITY TELLING THEM THAT HE INTENDED TO GO STRAIGHT IN A GRAY HOTEL ROOM, HE PAVED THE FLOOR FOR DAYS...

WHAT'S THE ANSWER? GETTING A JOB'S HARD FOR ME IF ONLY I COULD SCHEME UP SOME ANGLE - SOMETHING PERFECTLY SAFE! - WONDER WHO THAT CAN BE?

KNOCK!
KNOCK!

THE VISITOR WAS A COMPLETE STRANGER A STRANGE-LOOKING MAN WHO SEEMED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT RICK...

I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING YOUR CAREER FOR A LONG TIME, AND I HAVE A CERTAIN PROPOSITION I DON'T THINK YOU'LL TURN DOWN!

I'M ALWAYS WILLING TO LISTEN TO BUSINESS, MISTER!

THERE WAS SOMETHING HYPNOTIC ABOUT THE OLD MAN'S VOICE, A PECULIAR BRIGHTNESS IN HIS EYES WHICH COMPELLED RICK TO LISTEN INTENTLY...

I AM CALLED MORITIUS! I AM A - FORTUNE-TELLER, A PRACTICER OF THE BLACK ARTS - AND MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE OCCULT HAS ALLOWED ME TO LIVE FOR CENTURIES!

THIS GUY'S COMPLETELY CRAZY!

I KNOW YOU ARE DOUBTFUL - COME WITH ME TO MY HOME, WHERE I CAN EXPLAIN BETTER!

WHY NOT? I'VE GOT NOTHING TO LOSE!

SAY THIS IS QUITE A LAYOUT!

HARDLY THE HOME OF A MAN - WE MUST GO TO MY INNER SANCTUM! THERE YOU WILL SEE THE MYSTIC PENTAGON!

IN A ROOM HUNG WITH WEIRD SIGNS AND...

YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE MYSTIC PENTAGON, OF COURSE - BUT I AM THE ONLY MAN IN HISTORY TO SOLVE ITS MYSTERY! THERE IT IS ON THAT PARCHMENT - LOOK CLOSELY!



21 22 23 24



AT THAT MOMENT, ONE OF RICK'S LONGTIME UNDERWORLD KINGS PASSED...



THERE GOES BIG JIM DODDS, BOSS! IF YOU ASK ME ONE OF HIS BOYS SANG TO THE POLICE TO GET YOU YOUR LAST STRETCH!

DON'T I KNOW IT? IF ONLY I COULD GET EVEN WITH THAT GUY!

RICK DESPERATELY WANTED REVENGE, BUT HE DARED NOT TAKE IT! NEXT DAY...



YOU'RE BACK SOONER THAN I THOUGHT!

AND SO RICK HARRIS DREW THE SECOND LINE! AT BREAKFAST THE NEXT MORNING...



HEH HEH! THE PAPERS ARE FULL OF THE WAY THE FBI GRABBED BIG JIM DODDS LAST NIGHT ON A FEDERAL RAP! THEY SAY IT'LL BE A 20 YEAR STRETCH! PUNY IN THE LONG RUN THE LAW SEEMS TO CATCH UP WITH EVERYBODY!

TO RICK'S AMAZEMENT HE SOON FOUND THAT HIS FORTUNE WAS ACTUALLY BEGINNING TO RUN LOW...



30 G'S DOWN THE DRAIN IN ONE AFTER-NOON! WHAT A SAD I'VE BEEN! I SHOULD HAVE ASKED MORRIS FOR A LOT MORE THAN A MERE MILLION!

RICK HAD COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN HIS WILL POWER! HE HAD THREE WISHES LEFT—WHY NOT USE AT LEAST ONE OF THEM?



EXCELLENT, MY BOY! REMEMBER, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR TILL THE PENTAGON IS COMPLETE!

AND THAT'LL NEVER HAPPEN! I GUARANTEE IT! BECAUSE THIS TIME, I'M ASKING FOR TEN MILLION!

CUNNINGLY RICK OPENED UP ACCOUNTS IN DOZENS OF BANKS AROUND THE CITY TO DISGUISE HIS POSSESSION OF SUCH A HUGE FORTUNE...



BANKS ARE THE SAFEST PLACE FOR IT! BESIDES, I GET INTEREST! MORRIS SAYS HE'S GOT A SUCKER HERE! HE'LL SEE WHO'S THE SUCKER! I'LL NEVER OAH ME!

SEVERAL WEEKS LATER...



I COULD HAVE DANCED ALL NIGHT...

THAT GIRL... SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL! I'VE GOT TO MEET HER!

SUSAN OLIVER AROUSED IN HIM FEELINGS HE'D NEVER KNOWN BEFORE. HE SHOWERED HER WITH ATTENTION AND GIFTS...

AN EMERALD NECK-LACE! BUT I COULDN'T ACCEPT IT, RICK. IT'S MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE!

BUT I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT, BABY! PLEASE-- FOR ME

SHE WAS A VERY SWEET GIRL. STARRY EYED AND INNOCENT. AND SOON HE WAS HEAD OVER HEELS.

YOU DO LIKE ME, DON'T YOU, HONEY? I MEAN JUST A LITTLE BIT--?

I'M VERY FOND OF YOU, RICK--THOUGHT I MIGHT I SHOULDN'T BE!

WHY NOT? I LOVE YOU-- I WANT TO MARRY YOU!

I--I'M FLATTERED... BUT CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE? YOU'VE BEEN TO JAIL THREE TIMES--A FOURTH WOULD BE FOR KEEPS! I CAN'T LIVE WITH SUCH A SWORD OVER MY HEAD!

HAVING A REAL HOME WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE! BESIDES, RICK-- AND I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU-- WHAT SORT OF MAN AM I? A CRIMINAL-- WHO'S NEVER DONE A DECENT THING-- ALWAYS THOUGHT OF HIMSELF-- SELFISH-- WHO'S THROWN AWAY HIS TALENTS?

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, RICK HARRIS SAW HIMSELF FOR WHAT HE REALLY WAS. AND THE PICTURE HURT--HURT BADLY--

SHE'S RIGHT--I'VE BEEN A NO-GOOD ALL MY LIFE--EVIL! HOW MANY RAPS HAVE I BEATEN BECAUSE I HAD A GOOD LAWYER? CAN I THINK OF ONE DECENT THING I'VE EVER DONE?--BUT I LOVE THAT GIRL--LOVE HER--

AND BECAUSE HE LOVED HER, AND WANTED HER TO LOVE HIM, HE VISITED MORITUS ONCE MORE...

THERE! THE FOURTH LINE--BUT THIS IS THE LAST! AFTER SHE MARRIES ME I WON'T WANT ANYTHING MORE!

YOU'RE GETTING CLOSE, MY BOY! THE PENTAGON IS ALMOST COMPLETE!

THAT NIGHT--

I'M SO SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID, RICK! I'VE THOUGHT IT OVER--I LOVE YOU TOO MUCH TO GIVE YOU UP! I--I WANT TO MARRY YOU!

THAT PENTAGON SURE WORKS FAST! POOR SUSAN, SHE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER!

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE HAPPIEST
MOMENT OF RICK'S LIFE, BUT SOMEHOW—
HE WAS TROUBLED—

WE'LL BE SO
HAPPY DARLING—
JUST THE
TWO OF US—

SHE'S SO SWEET
—SO GOOD—
SHE DESERVES
BETTER THAN ME!
IT'S HORRIBLE THE
WAY SHE'S IN MY
POWER WITHOUT
REALIZING IT!



IN THE FOLLOWING DAYS THEY WERE
BUSY WITH WEDDING
PREPARATIONS—HE HELPED HER
SELECT A TROUSSEAU—

IT'S
BREATH-
TAKING!

NOW CAN I DO
THIS TO HER?
SHE'S BEEN
SWINDLED
INTO THIS
THING!



WE BEGAN BROODING MORE AND MORE
ABOUT IT. THOUGHT OF ALL THE EVIL THINGS
HE'D DONE WITHOUT PAYING THE PENALTY—

IF I MARRY HER, IT'LL BE
THE WORST CRIME I'VE EVER
COMMITTED! THAT BLACK-HEARTED
MORITIUS—ONLY HE GOES
UNPUNISHED—NOW WILL
THE LAW EVER CATCH
UP WITH HIM?



AFTER A SLEEPLESS NIGHT, HE SAW THINGS CLEARLY AT
LAST—

I CAN'T DO IT TO HER—
I'D HATE MYSELF TOO MUCH!
I LOVE HER, ALWAYS WILL, BUT
FOR ONCE I'LL DO THE RIGHT
THING! BUT FIRST, THERE'S
THIS LETTER TO
WRITE!



AFTER MAILING THE LETTER, RICK VISITED MORITIUS FOR
THE LAST TIME—TO DRAW THE FATAL FIFTH LINE!

I WISH THAT SUSAN SHOULD
NO LONGER LOVE ME, BUT
FORGET ME—SO
SHE'LL BE FREE TO
LEAD THE SORT
OF LIFE SHE
DESERVES!

WHAT? AN
UNSELFISH
WISH? YOU
REALIZE WHAT
THIS'LL MEAN?



A BLAZE OF LIGHT BURST FROM THE MYSTIC PENTAGON, AND
AT THAT MOMENT, RICK HARRIS WAS NO MORE—

RICK REALIZED ONLY TOO WELL! HE
KNEW THAT IF HE DREW THE LINE, HE
WOULD BECOME MORITIUS'S SLAVE
—THAT HIS PERSONALITY AND WILL
POWER WOULD CEASE TO EXIST—

IT DOESN'T
MATTER—
THERE! I—
I'VE DONE
IT!

HAHA-HA-
HA! THIS WAS
EASIER THAN
I THOUGHT!



AND NOW I TAKE
OVER THE SHELL OF HIS
BODY—WHILE DISCARDING
THIS OLD ONE! HIS REMAIN-
ING YEARS SHALL BE
MINE! HE WAS A
FOOL—LIKE ALL THE
OTHERS DOWN THE
CENTURIES!

MOMENTS LATER, THE TRANSFERENCE HAD BEEN MADE --

HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO HAVE THIS VIGOROUS YOUNG BODY INSTEAD OF THAT OLD ONE! THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION!



IMMENSELY PLEASED WITH HIMSELF, THE BORDERER, NOW OCCUPYING THE SHELL OF WHAT HAD BEEN RICK, LEFT THE MANSION! BUT IN THE STREET OUTSIDE--

OKAY, HARRIS... DON'T START ANY TROUBLE! YOU'RE COMING ALONG WITH US!

WH- WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?



I DEMAND MY RIGHTS! YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO ARREST ME!

THINK NOT! YOU'LL FIND OUT AT HEADQUARTERS! WE GOT A LETTER FROM SOME STOOGE PIGEON TELLING US WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO!



THE CHIEF OF POLICE WAS HOLDING THE UNSIGNED LETTER WHICH RICK HAD WRITTEN--

WHOEVER THE STOOGE WAS HE TELLS US EVERYTHING! YOU'VE GOT TEN MILLION BUCKS SCATTERED IN BANKS AROUND TOWN--AND YOU'VE NEVER PAID INCOME TAX ON IT! WE'VE ALREADY CHECKED!

NO--THIS CAN'T BE! I'VE BEEN TRICKED!



THOUGH HE HIRED THE BEST LAWYERS TO DEFEND HIM, THE CASE WAS OPEN AND SHUT! THE SENTENCE WAS AUTOMATIC--

AS A FOUR-TIME LOSER, THE PENALTY IS LIFE! YOU DESERVE THIS, HARRIS!

FOR... LIFE? NO... NO! I... I'LL PERISH!



AND SO, AFTER CENTURIES, MORITUS WAS CAUGHT AT LAST IN HIS OWN EVIL WEB! AS DETECTIVES TOOK HIM AWAY FOR THE LONG RIDE TO THE PENITENTIARY--



L-LAUGHTER... TRIUMPHANT LAUGHTER... COMING OUT OF NOWHERE! IT--IT'S HIM... RICK HARRIS... LAUGHING BECAUSE HE'S BEATEN ME!

Bubble Busters

I had taken a week end vacation and was walking through the market place of Asteroid-X2. There was always something enchanting and unusual to find in that walled and bubble protected city of Smorisband. For here you could find the old and the new. Merchants from Venus with sightseers from Earth. Soldiers from Pluto and students from the moon — all coming to Asteroid-X2. For this was a relay station of the Universe Patrol.

Idly my feet guided me through the crowded streets. We were all breathing oxygen in a part of the Universe where it did not exist. Deep down beneath the ground the oxygen machines were producing their daily quota of the living continuing gas. Very few of us carried the emergency mask and tank that had been required for the previous decade when we had been at war with Mars.

"Commander Ullway," a familiar voice greeted me from one of the numerous stalls in the bazaar. "I have some bargains for you. How would you like a rug from Timotan? Or some of the rare fruits from Bargomere? Well, well, a good sight for my old eyes. Come in and enjoy a cup of freshly brewed coffee with me."

I don't think I could ever forget Eornon who seemed almost ageless. We had saved him on the space freighter when a jet blaster went out of commission. A man with a very practical turn of mind. I still can remember the words he spoke to me.

"You have saved me. For this I am grateful. But all my goods are on that spaceship. Please save that cargo for me."

We did it but didn't realize the danger that encircled us. For a delay of five minutes would have spelt doom to all of us. That space freighter blew up and disintegrated; something we had not expected as we watched it through our rear window on my patrol ship. To be hurled by an explosion wasn't a choice way of travelling to one's doom.

I walked into his shop and sat down on a comfortable chair. He clapped his hand twice and a bule robot-server came with a small table and set it up. Then he poured out two cups of

coffee. According to the custom I sipped mine first.

"Everything is quiet and peaceful on Mars," smiled Eornon.

"Our occupying force is still there," I replied. "Willing to admit the Martians are still sullen, but we intend to stay there for a long time. I will visit the planet on my next trip."

Then I stopped speaking. There was something in the voice of Eornon when he had asked that question that sounded a bit tantalizing. As though he knew the answer before he asked the question.

"Something on your mind?" I shot back.

"You are a very clever man, Commander Ullway," he complimented me. "Or perhaps you can read my mind. You have about thirty Martians on our Asteroid. Theoretically you have checked them for security measures before you permitted them to leave Mars. They are all merchants with a lot of goods to sell. I bought some bargains from one called Renucker. Definitely it was sold to me at a loss.

"Why? Having that trend of mine immediately communicated with my friends here who also had dealings with the Martians. They too bought merchandise definitely at a loss. A business man exists only when he makes a profit. Now you tell me what was so important that would cause those merchants to make the expensive trip from Mars here, go through a lot of trouble to get clearance certificates, and then sell their goods at a loss? Go ahead, you tell me?"

Our Intelligence Group had been getting strange rumors but had been unable to check them to any definite source. They all centered around the same concept: A core of die-hards on Mars had secretly trained a sabotage group of men. Somewhere they would strike and it would be a sign for revolt on Mars. But where would they strike? And what would they do?

"If any group of people could smash the bubble protecting this city, most of us would die," I said slowly so that the importance of the situation should not be lost. "We have a missile guard over the entire area and feel rather secure. If they caught our planes ground-

ed we would be dealt a terrific blow. It would take time to establish another relay station. We have had our men shadow every one of those merchants who arrived here from Mars. We are not taking any chances."

"They are leaving on different spaceships but at the same time," continued my friend. "Does that make any sense? If something should happen not one of them would be here to be injured or killed."

I was worried and my eyes turned to the side where the robot-server was standing. I clapped my hands twice and it came over to me. I pushed the third control button and then opened a slide. Next I removed a small recording tape. For everything we had said had been "taken in" by that robot-server.

"Just a security measure," I said as amazement spread all over the face of Eornon. "Come let us both walk. Close up your shop. I want to visit some of your friends. Maybe they have something to tell me."

Soon the two of us were winding our way through a narrow street. A group of students were watching a "Magician" do some age old tricks.

"See this empty box," he intoned. "Nothing on the outside. Nothing in the inside. Now watch me turn it over and then back."

Which he did and there in the inside was a small growing Bolo Tree. It grew quickly to a height of ten feet. The crowd applauded and they threw him some coins. I opened my purse and threw a gold coin at him which he picked up.

"The Earth Man is very liberal. No doubt he was pleased with my performance," grinned the "Magician."

"You well earned it," I said and turned around with my friend following me and trying to figure out what I was going to do. We spotted a small helicopter cab.

"To the Relay Station outside the Dombro-vian Marshes. At full speed."

"Yes, Commander," replied the driver.

Ten minutes later we were in my office. I left Eornon there with Lieutenant Bommel. I had a lot of orders to give.

"Arrest every Martian on sight and stop every freighter from leaving here. Get every Universe Patrol ship up into space. Let them hover at the third band. Put your radar screens and energy detectors in reverse. I want to know what is happening inside this Asteroid. Then triple the guards at the oxygen machines. I also want security men at the distribution centers."

Before nightfall the arrested Martians were all in my office. I had chairs brought in and also the "Magician" with his box. He repeated his trick that I had seen.

"Exactly what are the charges against us?"

demanded Renucker, the Martian. "We haven't done anything wrong. Our credentials and backgrounds were checked very carefully before we left Mars."

"You are all members of a sabotage group," I replied. "And it was a very clever plan. You brought with you among the items for sale some 126 rugs. You sold 63 of these at a loss. Where are the other 63?"

There was no reply and I knew definitely that they were trying to figure out how much I learned, and from whom. So I continued speaking.

"You were like this 'Magician.' Nothing outside and nothing inside. Your crates of merchandise were double checked when you came here. You wore stolen energy units into those rugs. And like the tree, they will suddenly grow with terrific explosions. All you have to do is to plant those rugs somewhere."

It was a clever idea you had — create the explosion from underground. That would set the oxygen aflame, but we also depend upon the oxygen to keep up the internal pressure on our protective bubble. You were going to destroy that pressure. Then the outside pressure would be greater and burst our bubble.

Don't try to chuckle inside and feel secure that even though we know your plan, we won't be able to do anything about it. The energy detectors will find the rugs, and your punishment is going to be unique. I am going to return all of you safely to Mars. I won't even send you to a compound. You shall walk around Mars freely. Of course they shall all know you failed. And they shall wonder why you failed. Suspicion will be planted and something tells me a lot of things may happen to you."

"I have often heard them say how clever you were, Commander," began Renucker the Martian. "I'll talk. Tell you everything but just one favor. Don't send us back to Mars. You can exile us to any of the other planets or stars, but not to Mars."

I agreed and he produced a chart showing where all the destructive rugs had been planted. The energy detectors found them all but the chart helped a lot. I kept my word. We sent the group as sort of prisoners to the colony on Mauritania.

I offered my friend any reward he so desired, but he just smiled.

"Let it never be said that Eornon could forget to help one who had helped him. Anyway, you should know that my father was killed in the Martian War. So that also honors his memory."

— THE END —

WHAT'S ^{behind that} SUPERSTITION?



DR. ORIN BLAKELY CURATOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIC RESEARCH---

WE'VE DONE QUITE A BIT OF RESEARCH INTO COMMON SUPERSTITIONS! AND HAVING JUST RECEIVED AN INQUIRY RELATING TO THE ORIGIN OF THE BELIEF THAT IT'S BAD LUCK TO WALK UNDER A LADDER, WE THOUGHT THAT ALL YOU READERS MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN OUR FINDINGS!



*ACCORDING TO ONE BELIEF, THE SUPERSTITION STARTED DURING THE ANCIENT TIME WHEN CAVE DWELLERS USED LADDERS TO MOUNT TO THEIR HOMES---



SOMETIMES, AN ENEMY WOULD TRY TO COME CLOSE WITHOUT BEING OBSERVED AND THAT MEANT CREEPING IN UNDER THE LADDER



BUT GUARDS WERE STATIONED ON NEARBY HEIGHTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORESTALLING THIS PERIL.



"SEE THE RESULTS? HERE'S ONE COWP WHO GOT BAD LUCK APLENTY FROM WALKING UNDER A LADDER!"



"PERHAPS THERE WAS ANOTHER ORIGIN FOR THIS SUPERSTITION! LADDERS WERE FREQUENTLY USED IN OLD ENGLAND TO BRIDGE THE QUAGMIRE OF MUD THAT LAY CLOSE TO THE HOUSES..."



"SOMETIMES HOWEVER, INEBRIATED HOUSEHOLDERS WOULD COME HOME AND SQUIGGER UNDER THE LADDER ... WITH DISASTROUS RESULTS!"



"THESE, OF COURSE, ARE SUPPOSITIONS! THE TRUTH, IN ALL PROBABILITY, WAS NEARER THIS..."



"OR EVEN THIS..."



"SOME EVEN SAY THAT THE SUPERSTITION AROSE FROM A MAN STEADYING THE ELOPEMENT LADDER FROM BENEATH--AND GAINING A BRIDE WHO LATER MADE HIM MISERABLE!"



"THAT'S THE STORY, AS WE KNOW IT! AND IF YOU HAVE A PET SUPERSTITION, READER, AND WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ITS ORIGIN-- JUST WRITE TO ME IN CARE OF THIS MAGAZINE!"



THERE ARE THINGS YOU IMAGINE...STORIES YOU TELL...AND EVENTS THAT ACTUALLY HAPPEN! AND SOMETIMES TRUTH CAN BE FAR, FAR STRANGER THAN ANY FICTION! FOR PROOF OF THIS, LET'S LOOK IN ON...

A DAY in the LIFE of TOMMY TRENT!









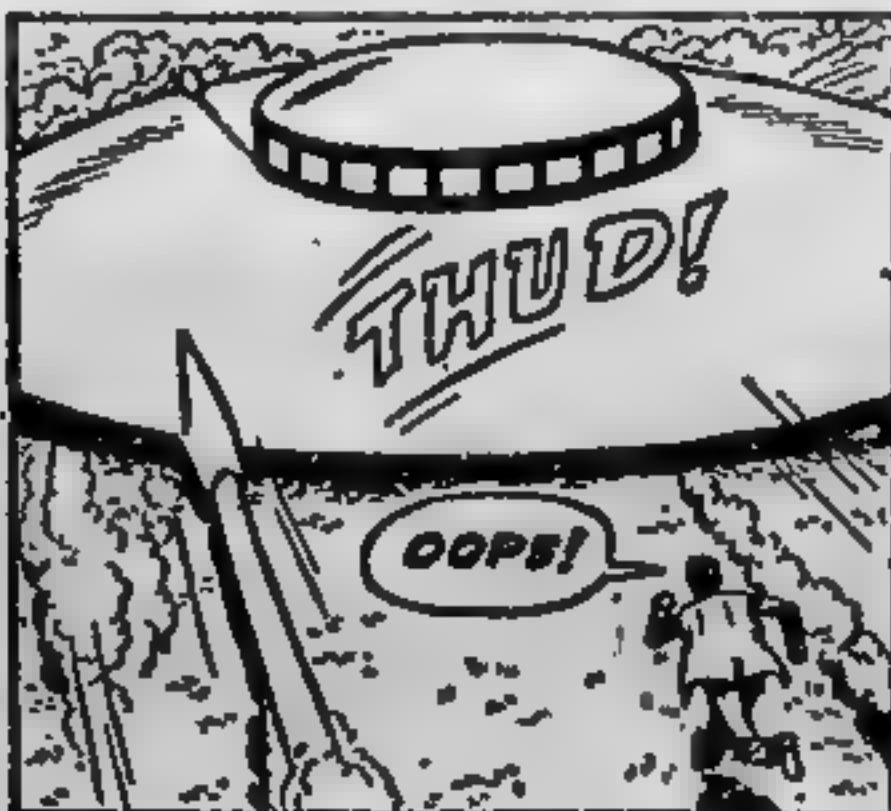
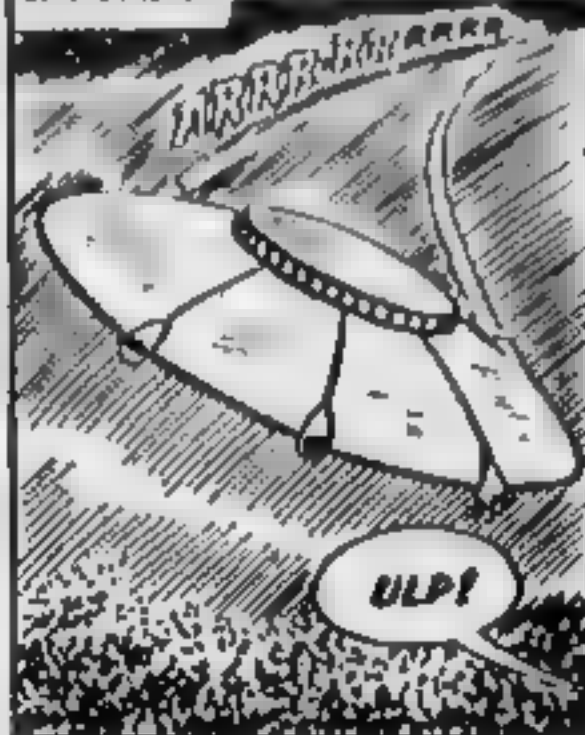


HE KNEW HE'D BEEN SHOWN UP--AND THE
ACKNOWLEDGE WAS BITTER WITHIN HIM--

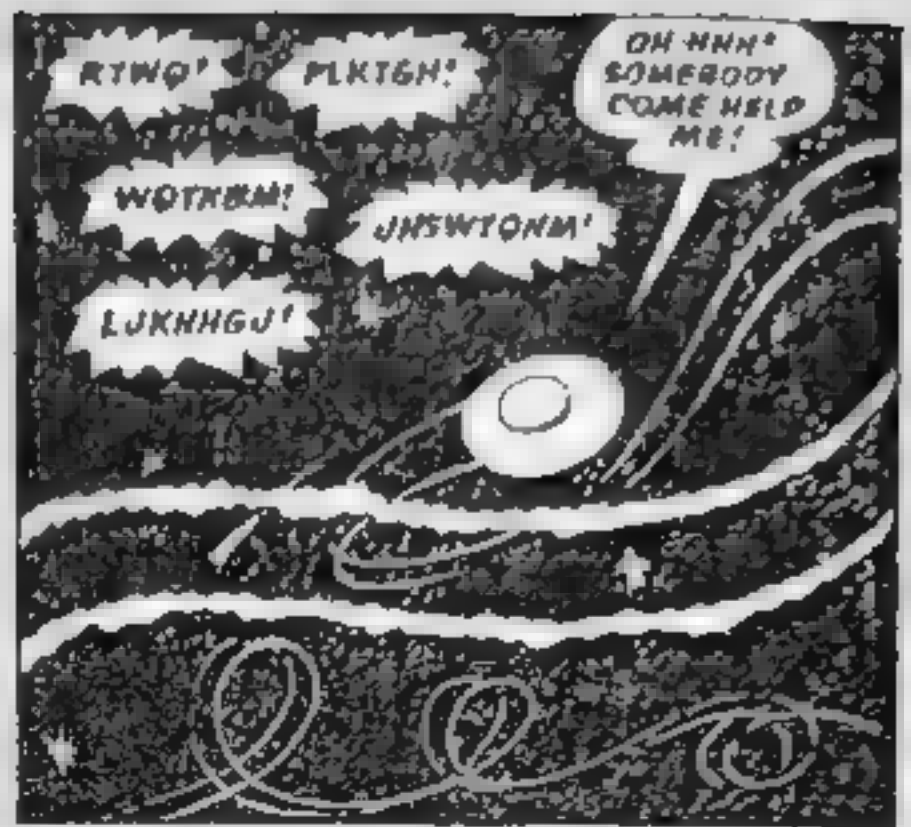
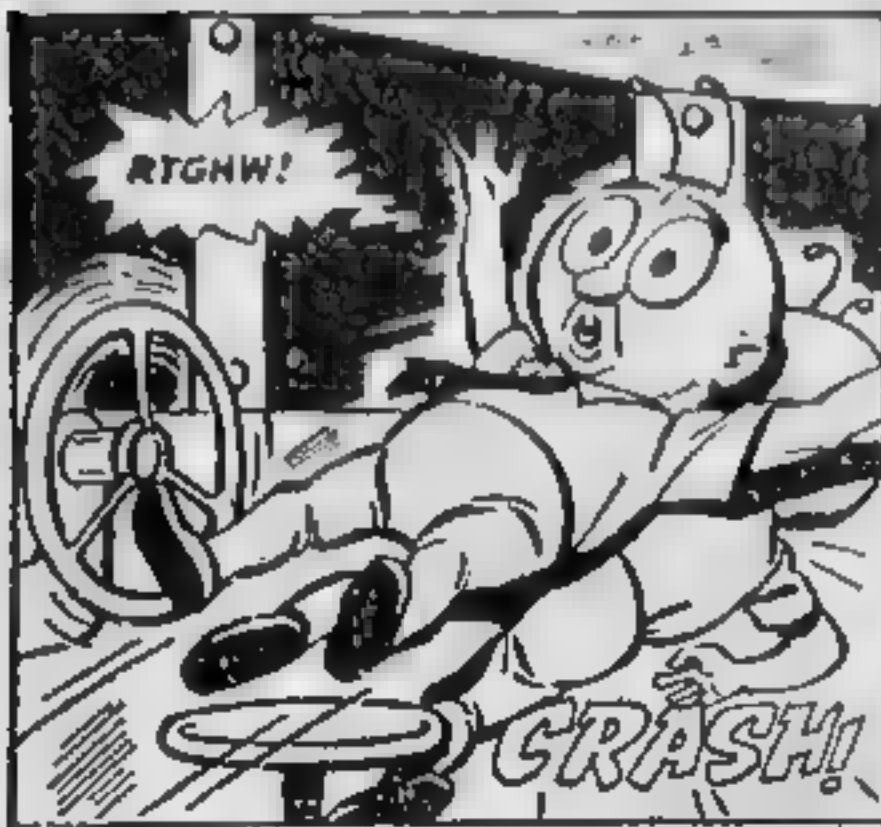
I'LL SHOW 'EM YET! SOMEDAY SOME-
THING IMPORTANT WILL REALLY
HAPPEN TO ME--AND THEN THEY'LL
THINK I'M A BIG SHOT!



SUDDENLY A LOW, WHINING BEEP--AND OUT
OF THE NIGHT--









WHAT'S BEHIND (that) SUPERSTITION?



YESSIR, ONE THING I ALWAYS SAY- SUPERSTITION IS FOR THE **BIRDS!**

BOY, ARE YOU EVER **RIGHT!** IT SURE IS A **SUCKER PROPOSITION!**



YOU DON'T CATCH ME WORRYING ABOUT HOW MANY MIRRORS I BREAK- OR STUFF LIKE THAT!

AND I DON'T CARE HOW MANY LADDERS I WALK UNDER, OR HOW MANY BLACK CATS WALK ACROSS MY PATH- BUT- BUT THERE IS **ONE** THING I AM KIND OF **LEERY** ABOUT!





IT WAS DON MIGUEL'S FANCY TO PERSONALLY TURN OFF THE CANNONADE! HERE CAME THE FIRST BOLT...



AND NOW THE SECOND DISCHARGED BY HIS HAND, HIT HOME!



THEN CAME THE THIRD LIGHT ON A SINGLE MATCH...



...AND TRAGEDY!



THE 3-ON-A-MATCH SUPERSTITION MIGHT HAVE BEEN STARTED BY EITHER OF THESE LEGENDS! BUT IT PROBABLY STEMMED FROM SOMETHING FAR MORE DOWN TO EARTH... SOMETHING LIKE THIS...

BETTER GET YOURSELF A NEW LIGHT - THAT ONE'S TOO SHORT BY NOW!

NONSENSE... IF I CAN'T GET THREE PIPES GOING WITH A SINGLE LIGHT, I'M NAUGHT BUT A CLUNSY GAF!



BUT THE WARNING WAS RIGHT...



WELL, READER, THAT'S THAT... AND NOW YOUR EDITOR HAS A MESSAGE FOR YOU! IF YOU WANT TO PLAY AROUND WITH SUPERSTITIONS LIKE THIS GO AHEAD... AS LONG AS YOU DON'T LET THEM RULE YOUR LIFE! JUST REMEMBER THAT ALL SUPERSTITIONS ARE FOOLISH... AND THAT THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PLAIN COMMON SENSE!



READER, DO YOU BELIEVE IN LUCKY TOKENS? DO YOU THINK THAT CIRCUMSTANCE CAN BE CHANGED BY THINGS? HERE'S A STORY OF TWO BROTHERS WHO DID...WHO REPOSED THEIR FAITH IN AN ANCIENT GEM! AND IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE STRANGE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM, READ...

The GOOD LUCK RING!



LET'S START OUR STORY BACK IN THE CHILDHOOD OF ALFRED AND JACK MYLES...

LOOK --JACK'S REACHING FOR YOUR HAND AGAIN! CAN IT BE THE RING THAT FASCINATES HIM?

MAYBE--BUT LOOK AT ALFRED! THE CHILD REALLY KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS!

YES, ALFRED MYLES, THE OLDER CHILD, ALWAYS KNEW WHAT HE WANTED! AS THE BOYS GREW...

WHY DON'T YOU ASK FOR THINGS, JACK --THE WAY YOUR BROTHER ALFRED DOES?

I HAVE A GOOD TIME READING AND WONDERING ABOUT THINGS INSTEAD! THERE--THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I WANT--

I-- I'D LIKE TO WEAR YOUR RING FOR ANNIIE!

IS THAT ALL? ALL RIGHT BUT TODAY IT PARTLY LIVES ON MY MIND IT'S BEEN IN THE FAMILY FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. IT'S SAID TO BRING GOOD LUCK TO THE DESERVING!

I-- I'D LIKE TO WEAR YOUR RING FOR ANWILE!

IS THAT ALL? ALL RIGHT BUT TODAY I'D PREFER TO LIVE WITH MY MARRIED RING WITHIN THE FAMILY FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. IT'S SAID TO BRING GOOD LUCK TO THE POSSESSORS!

THE MOST A DOPPEY OLD SINGIN' TAP WAS GOOD LITTLE DOPPEY OLD HEAR FATHER SAY

WHEN YOU CAN'T HAVE WONDERFUL THINGS IN LIFE WHAT'S THE USE OF A DOPPEY OLD SINGIN'?

THE MOST A DOPPEY OLD SINGIN' TAP WAS GOOD LITTLE DOPPEY OLD HEAR FATHER SAY

WHEN YOU CAN'T HAVE WONDERFUL THINGS IN LIFE WHAT'S THE USE OF A DOPPEY OLD SINGIN'?

THE BROTHERS GREW UP, WENT TO COLLEGE TOGETHER!
BUT EVEN HERE THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THE TWO WAS EVIDENT...

A black and white comic book illustration. The top panel shows a man driving a car. The bottom panel shows a man in a lab coat working with laboratory equipment, including a large flask and test tubes. The text above the panels reads: "THE BROTHERS GREW UP, WENT TO COLLEGE TOGETHER! BUT EVEN HERE THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO WAS EVIDENT..."

THE YEARS PASSED.—THEIR FATHER DIED! HIS WILL SPOKE OF THE FAVORITISM HE'D ALWAYS FELT TOWARDS HIS OLDER SON.—

—AND TO ALFRED, MY OLDER SON, I LEAVE THE SUM OF \$150,000! TO JACK MY YOUNGER SON, IN RECOGNITION OF HIS ABILITY TO MAKE HIS OWN WAY IN THE WORLD, I LEAVE ANOTHER SUM OF \$5,000—AND THE OLD GOOD LUCK RING I ALWAYS WORE—



THE YEARS PASSED.—THEIR FATHER DIED! HIS WILL SPOKE OF THE FAVORITISM HE'D ALWAYS FELT TOWARDS HIS OLDER SON.—

—AND TO ALFRED, MY OLDER SON, I LEAVE THE SUM OF \$150,000! TO JACK MY YOUNGER SON, IN RECOGNITION OF HIS ABILITY TO MAKE HIS OWN WAY IN THE WORLD, I LEAVE ANOTHER SUM OF \$5,000—AND THE OLD GOOD LUCK RING I ALWAYS WORE—



Tough luck, Jack? I mean, we're getting all that money, while you—

I'm not worried... wealth never really meant much to me while I had my science! Anyway, I've always wanted this ring—I had the crazy idea that it would bring me luck!

Tough luck, Jack? I mean, we're getting all that money, while you—

I'm not worried... wealth never really meant much to me while I had my science! Anyway, I've always wanted this ring—I had the crazy idea that it would bring me luck!

COULD JACK HAVE BEEN-- RIGHT? FOR ALFRED, WITHOUT THE RING, PROCEEDED TO GO THROUGH THE FORTUNE WHICH HE HAD INHERITED--

LOST AGAIN?
CAN'T THINGS
EVER BREAK RIGHT
FOR ME?

COULD JACK HAVE BEEN-- RIGHT? FOR ALFRED, WITHOUT THE RING, PROCEEDED TO GO THROUGH THE FORTUNE WHICH HE HAD INHERITED--

LOST AGAIN?
CAN'T THINGS
EVER BREAK RIGHT
FOR ME?

WHEREAS JACK, WHO WORE THE RING CONSTANTLY, DIDN'T KNOW WHAT LOSS OR FAILURE MEANT! HIS RESEARCH ON SPACE PROJECTILES WAS CONSTANTLY SUCCESSFUL---

GENTLEMEN---I BELIEVE I'VE SOLVED THE PROBLEM OF MOTIVE POWER!



IT WAS A GRIM COINCIDENCE THAT THE TWO NEWS STORIES SHOULD BREAK ON THE SAME DAY---



JUST BEEN READING THE NEWS STORY ABOUT YOU, JACK! CONGRATULATIONS!

THANKS! BUT IT'D BETTER GET BACK TO CHECKING THE ROCKET! SHE'S GOING UP TOMORROW MORNING, YOU KNOW!



AND MEANWHILE---

GOING--
GOING--
GONE!

NIGHT AS WELL PICK UP SOME BARGAINS! FUNNY THING--THIS MYLES GUY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AS UNLUCKY AS HIS BROTHER IS LUCKY!

BUT WHY--WHY? WHAT'S JACK GOT THAT BRINGS HIM SUCH CONSTANT GOOD FORTUNE?

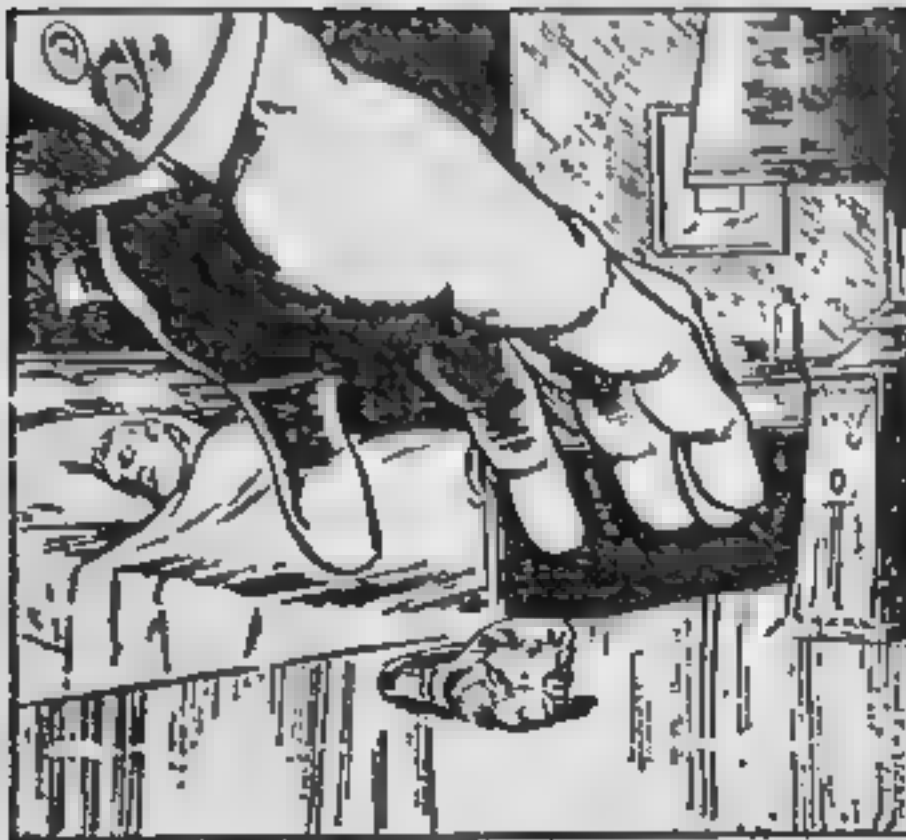


THE OLD GOOD LUCK RING---THAT'S IT! IT'S GOT TO BE! I---I'VE GOT TO GET HOLD OF IT, AND I'M GOING TO! I'VE GOTTEN USED TO A SOFT, EASY LIFE, TO EVERY LUXURY--- AND WITH LUCK, THAT'S WHAT I'LL HAVE!



AND SO THAT NIGHT ALFRED CREEPT INTO HIS BROTHER'S ROOM, ABOVE THE LABORATORY---





THIS WAS A STRANGE ORSESSION -- THAT THE POSSESSION OF THE OLD RING ALONE WOULD BRING HIS LUCK BRING GOOD FORTUNE HIS WAY! AND THE RING WAS HIS NOW



SHORTLY AFTER--INSIDE THE ROCKET PROJECT ROOM--

I COULD HAVE SWORN THERE WAS A PROWLER-- BUT WHERE COULD HE HAVE GOTTEN TO? GUESS IT WAS ALL MY IMAGINATION! BUT I'D BETTER STAY AROUND HERE, JUST TO MAKE SURE THE ROCKET'S SAFE!

WHEN JACK AWOKE...

THE OLD RING...IT'S GONE! GOSH, I HOPE I CAN LOCATE IT...IT'S MY GOOD LUCK TOKEN!

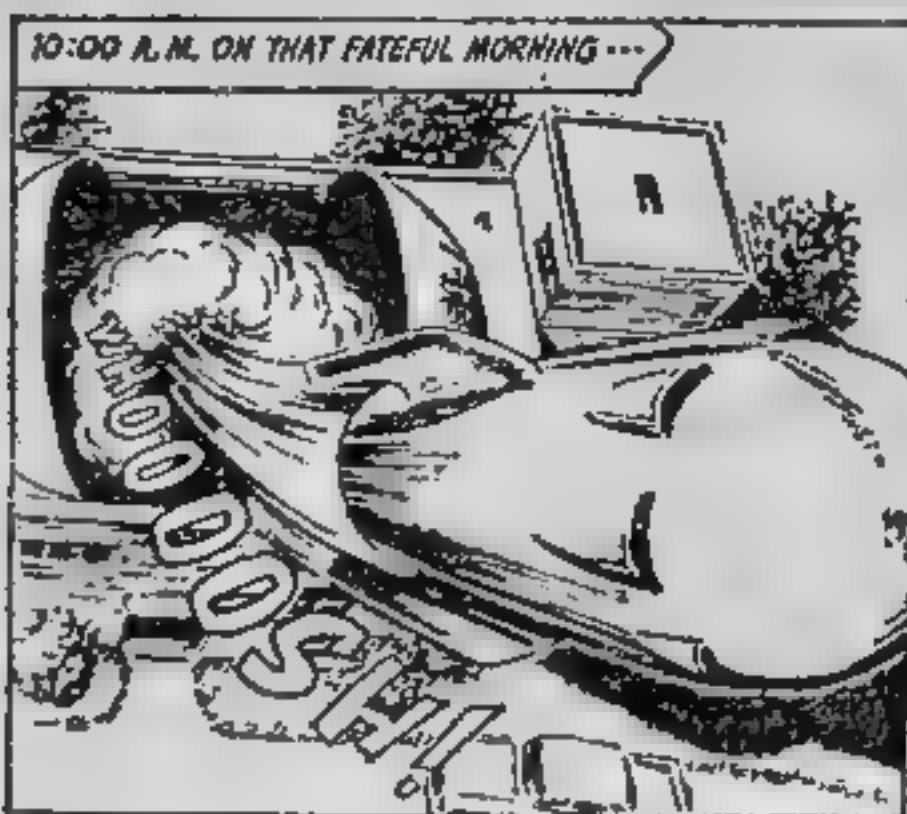


I'VE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE! I'D HAVE SAID THAT SOMEBODY GOT IN HERE LAST NIGHT AND STOLE IT, EXCEPT THAT IT'S THE ONLY THING MISSING!

I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMEONE AROUND! MIGHT HAVE CAUGHT HIM, TOO, IF I HADN'T DECIDED THAT GUARDING THE ROCKET WAS MORE IMPORTANT! AFTER ALL...IT'S SCHEDULED TO TAKE OFF AT TEN!



10:00 A.M. ON THAT FATEFUL MORNING...



WOW-- WAS THAT A TAKEOFF! HOW'S ABOUT A FEW FACTS FOR OUR STORIES, DR. MYLES? AFTER ALL THERE'S NO MORE REASON FOR SECRECY NOW!

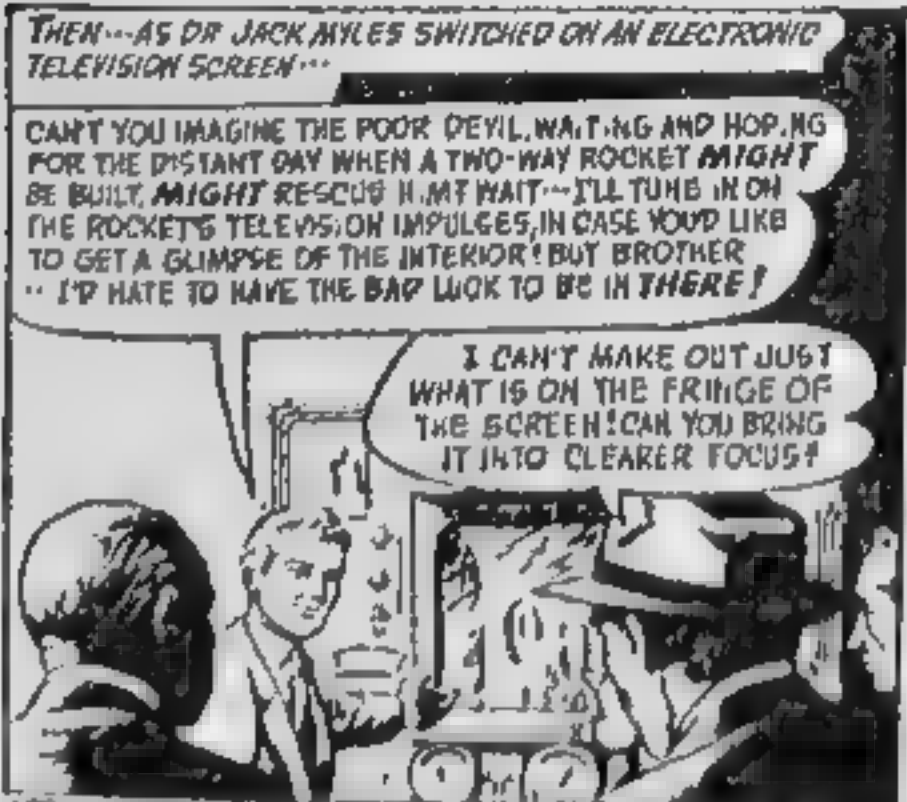
SURE! THAT WAS NO ORDINARY PROJECTILE...IT WAS THE FIRST ROCKET TO THE MOON! SEVERAL VOLUNTEERS WANTED TO TAKE THE TRIP...UNTIL THEY FOUND OUT SHE'S GOT JUST ENOUGH POWER TO GET THERE...AND NEVER RETURN! A MAN WOULD HAVE A TOUGH TIME UP THERE...SLAVING ON AN EMPTY SATELLITE JUST TO STAY ALIVE!



THEN...AS DR. JACK MYLES SWITCHED ON AN ELECTRONIC TELEVISION SCREEN...

CAN'T YOU IMAGINE THE POOR DEVIL, WAITING AND HOPING FOR THE DISTANT DAY WHEN A TWO-WAY ROCKET MIGHT BE BUILT, MIGHT RESCUE HIM? WAIT...I'LL TUNE IN ON THE ROCKET'S TELEVISION IMPULSES, IN CASE YOU'D LIKE TO GET A GLIMPSE OF THE INTERIOR! BUT BROTHER...I'D HATE TO HAVE THE BAD LUCK TO BE IN THERE!

I CAN'T MAKE OUT JUST WHAT IS ON THE FRINGE OF THE SCREEN! CAN YOU BRING IT INTO CLEARER FOCUS?



HE MOVED THE CONTROLS...AND AN IMAGE TOOK SHAPE!

MERCIFUL... HEAVENS!



YES, ALFRED HAD FORGOTTEN THE WORDS HIS FATHER HAD SPOKEN SO MANY YEARS BEFORE! WHAT WERE THEY? OH YES... "THE RING IS SAID TO BRING GOOD LUCK...TO THE DESERVING!"

CIRCUS HERO

LEO, THE LION, WAS FEARED BY EVERY MEMBER OF THE CIRCUS TROUPE EXCEPT HIGH-WIRE STAR DIANNE DAVIS... HER STRANGE LOVE FOR THE ANIMAL WAS OBVIOUSLY RETURNED WHEN LEO BECAME A CIRCUS HERO...

BE CAREFUL! HE WON'T HARM ANYONE! DON'T HURT HIM!



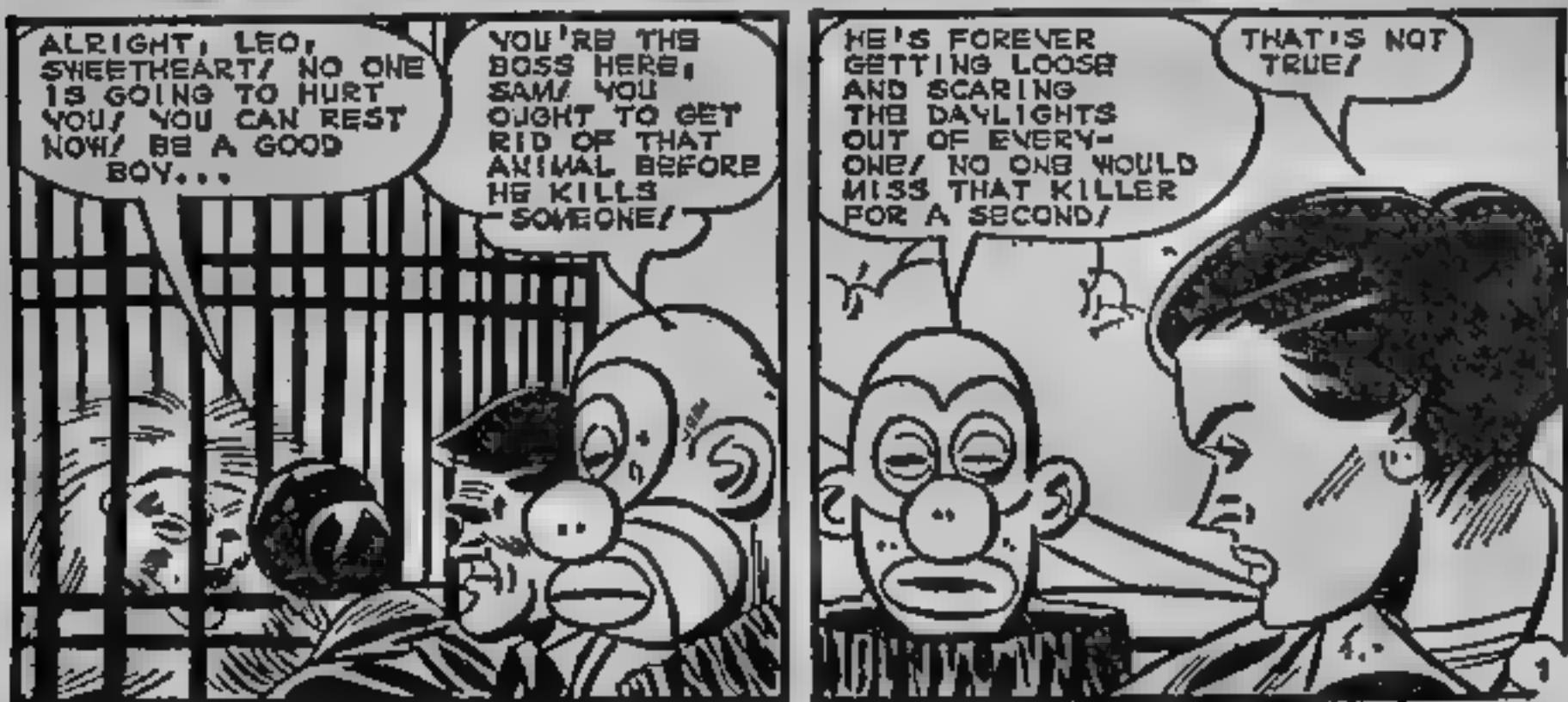
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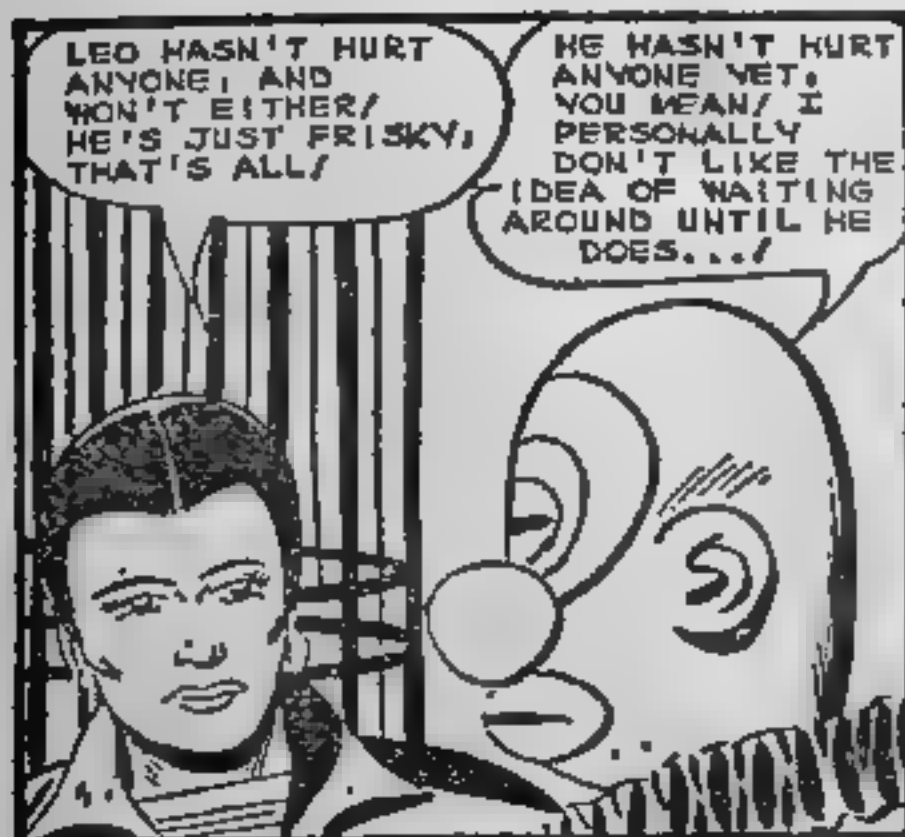
ALRIGHT, LEO, SWEETHEART! NO ONE IS GOING TO HURT YOU! YOU CAN REST NOW! BE A GOOD BOY...

YOU'RE THE BOSS HERE, SAM! YOU OUGHT TO GET RID OF THAT ANIMAL BEFORE HE KILLS SOMEONE!

HE'S FOREVER GETTING LOOSE AND SCARING THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF EVERYONE! NO ONE WOULD MISS THAT KILLER FOR A SECOND!

THAT'S NOT TRUE!





LESS THAN A WEEK LATER LEO WAS
ONCE AGAIN ON THE LOOSE...



NO, LESTER!
DON'T SHOOT!



GET BACK IN
YOUR CAGE,
LEO! DO AS
I SAY! GET
INTO THE
CAGE!

WELL, I'LL BE...! IN
ALL MY YEARS IN THE
CIRCUS, I'VE NEVER
SEEN ANYTHING LIKE
IT BEFORE!...



IT'S ALRIGHT NOW, LEO!
LESTER WON'T HARM YOU,
BE A GOOD BOY AND STAY
IN THE CAGE!



THAT LION
LOVES YOU AS MUCH
AS YOU LOVE IT!
IT'S THE MOST
AMAZING THING
I EVER SAW!

LESTER, YOU
SHOULD BE AS-
HAMED TO CALL
YOURSELF A LION
TRAINER! YOU
HAVEN'T ANY IDEA
OF HOW TO HANDLE
LEO!



I KNOW YOU GAVE
LEO ONLY ONE
MORE CHANCE,
SAM, BUT IF
HE GOES, SO
DO I!

ALRIGHT, DIANNE!
IF YOU CARE
ENOUGH TO SAVE
THE ANIMAL'S
LIFE, I GLESS I
CAN CARE ENOUGH
TO KEEP IT A LIT-
TLE LONGER...



THE WEEKS FOLLOWED UNEVENTFULLY FOR THE CIRCUS TROUPE... LEO HADN'T BROKEN LOOSE, AND EVERYTHING WENT ON IN ORDERLY FASHION... UNTIL ONE NIGHT DURING THE MIDDLE OF A PERFORMANCE...



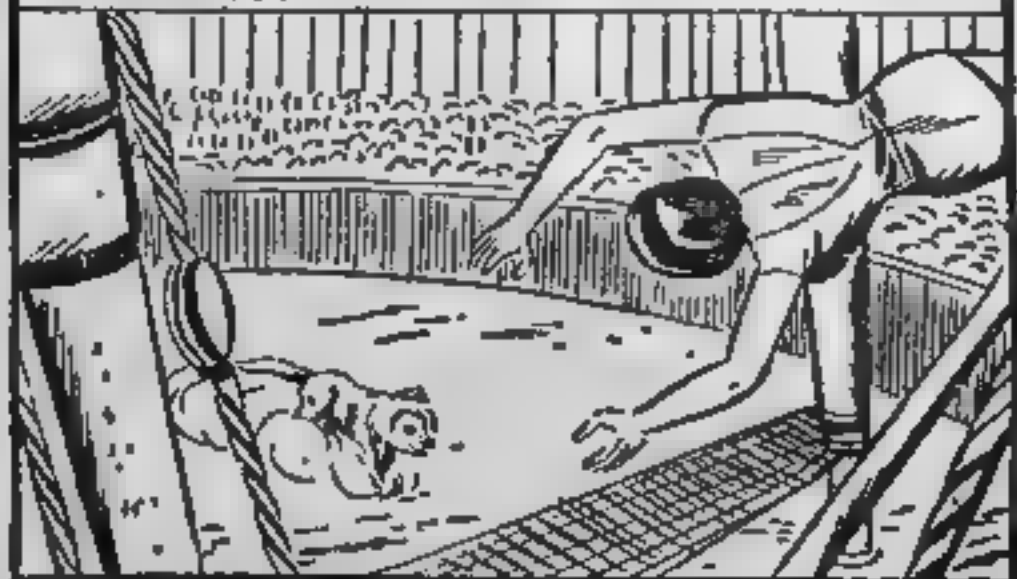
LOOK OUT! SHE'S GOING TO FALL!

YEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

AT EXACTLY THE SAME INSTANT DIANNE STUMBLED ON THE HIGH-WIRE, LEO WAS ABOUT TO BE LOCKED IN HIS CAGE... SUD- DENLY HE BROKE LOOSE, AND RAN TOWARD THE ARENA...



THE ANIMAL SEEMED INSTINCTIVELY TO RACE FOR THE EXACT SPOT DIANNE WAS DESTINED TO LAND...



LEO'S CAUGHT IN THE NET!

NO! HE'S DRAWING THE NET UNDER! DIANNE!! I DON'T BELIEVE MY EYES!



LATER... I DON'T THINK WE'LL EVER LET LEO GO! HE'S UNDOUBTEDLY A "CIRCUS HERO!"...

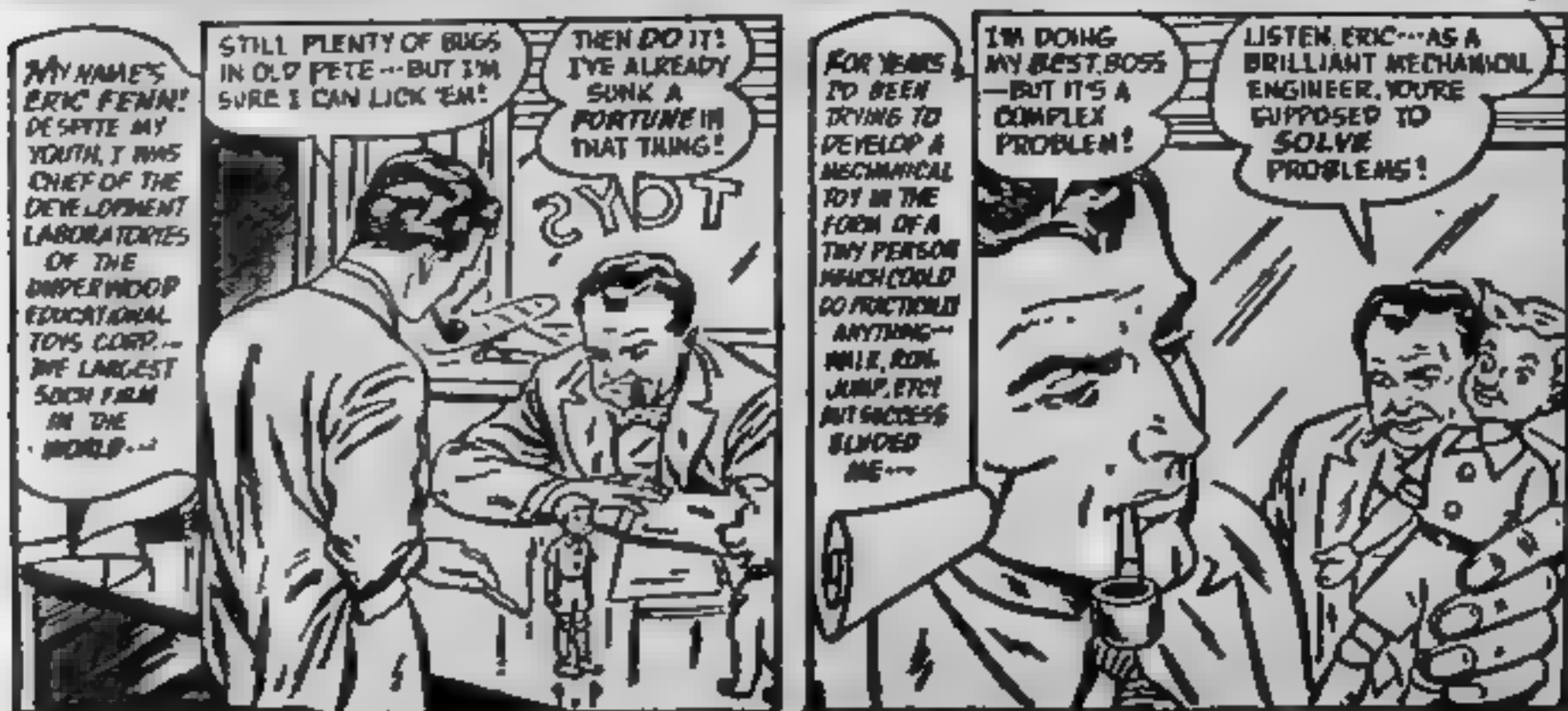
THAT'S A GOOD BOY, LEO! NO ONE WILL BE AFRAID OF YOU ANY MORE...



END

IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY HAPPY ACCIDENTS* BUT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME UNPLEASANT ONES, TOO... SUCH AS I ACHIEVED IN FINALLY CREATING...

PETER PLASTIC!





WE'D NICKNAMED OUR LITTLE MASTER TOY **PETER PLASTIC**... AND THOUGH HE DIDN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH, HE WAS A MIRACLE OF ENGINEERING.

THERE'S 312 MILES OF TRANSPARENT WIRING IN THAT BODY... NOT TO MENTION THAT EVERY INCH OF PLASTIC WAS ORIGINALLY TWISTED INTO THE EXACT CONFIGURATION OF HUMAN MUSCLES!

YEAH, A BEAUTIFUL FAILURE!



NOT YET! IF ONLY I COULD GET ENOUGH STRENGTH INTO ITS POWER PLANT TO ACTIVATE IT--

WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING, CHASE! BUT WE CAN'T GET IT TO OPERATE FOR MORE THAN A MINUTE OR TWO!



OF COURSE, **PETER PLASTIC** WAS MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE TO PUT ON THE MARKET-- OUR INVESTMENT WAS ONLY TO INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITIES...

ONCE IT WORKS, WE CAN SIMPLIFY IT-- PUT IT IN MASS PRODUCTION! EVERY KID IN THE COUNTRY WILL WANT ONE!



IN DESPAIR I'D STARTED TO TAKE MY PROBLEM HOME WITH ME-- WORKING TO THE SMALL HOURS OF MORNING--

ANOTHER DEAD END-- I JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH POWER! WELL, I'D BETTER KNOCK OFF FOR THE NIGHT!



I LIVED IN A RATHER REMOTE OLD HOME ON LONG ISLAND-- I WAS A MAN WHO ENJOYED SOLITUDE! THAT NIGHT THERE WAS A VIOLENT STORM--



TERRIFIC CLAPS OF THUNDER AND FLASHING STREAKS OF LIGHTNING SUDDENLY WOKE ME-- NEARLY FLINGING ME OUT OF BED--

HOLY HANNAH! THE HOUSE HAS BEEN HIT!

CRACK!



I RACED FRANTICALLY DOWNSTAIRS-- TO FIND MY WORKROOM A SHAMBLES, AND JUST IN TIME TO STAMP OUT A SMALL FIRE--

OH, NO! EVERYTHING'S BEEN RUINED! AND PETE-- WHERE'S PETE?

I KEPT THINKING ABOUT THE \$50,000 INVESTMENT... BLOWN TO SMITHERS! BUT THEN I SPOTTED IT MARVELOUSLY INTACT...

IT GOT PLUNGED WAY OVER HERE! FODNY, IT'S GOING OFF A GLOW!

CARELESSLY, I TRIED PICKING IT UP-- AND A SEARING CURRENT SHOT THROUGH ME--

YEOWWW!
HOLY MACKEREL, IT'S ELECTRICALLY CHARGED!
IT MUST HAVE TAKEN A DIRECT HIT!

I WATCHED THE THING GLOW LIKE A NEON TUBE FOR SEVERAL MINUTES-- THEN, TO MY UTTER AMAZEMENT--

IT-- IT'S MOVING!
N-NO-- I MUST BE IMAGINING THIS!

IT'S ACTING-- STUNNED-- AS IF-- AS IF THE LIGHTNING DAZED IT! BUT THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING--

THEN CAME A WEIRD BUZZING SOUND-- AND BEFORE I'D GATHERED MY WITS TOGETHER--

GOOD GRIEF-- IT'S FLYING!

IT STOOD UP, STRETCHED, RESTARTED TO RUN-- IN DAZZLED LITTLE CIRCLES--

STILL INCREDULOUS, I DASHED OUTSIDE-- AND IN THE BLACK SKY I COULD SEE IT EASILY--

IT'S STREAKING AWAY-- THE WHOLE MECHANISM MUST BE WIPED! MY GOSH, IT'LL BE A JOKE FINDING THAT THING WHEN IT CRASHES!

I FIGURED ON STARTING A SEARCH FOR THE WRECKAGE IN THE MORNING, BUT AS I DROVE INTO TOWN--

REPORTS STILL POUR IN CONCERNING A STRANGE, GLOWING OBJECT-- LOOKING VERY MUCH LIKE A FLYING MAN! THE AIR CORPS IS ALREADY INVESTIGATING THE RUMOR OF A POSSIBLE VISITOR FROM ANOTHER PLANET--

OH, NO!

I BARGED RIGHT IN ON THE BOSS AND TOLD EVERYTHING IMMEDIATELY--

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SPOTTING PETER PLASTIC! I NEVER DREAMED IT COULD REMAIN AWAY THIS LONG!

I'VE GOT TO CALL THE NEWSPAPERS-- TO STOP THE PANIC--

BUT THE SCREAMING HEADLINES IN THE AFTERNOON PAPERS CREATED EVEN MORE OF A SENSATION...



SCIENTISTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ARE SAYING THAT ER. O. FENN MAY HAVE CREATED A NEW FORM OF LIFE!

ALL DAY THE CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT WORKED FURIOUSLY! FOR ALMOST EVERY PLACE THE PLASTIC OBJECT WENT, A FIRE WAS LEFT IN ITS WAKE!

LOOK! THERE IT IS!

WE WON'T GET A MOMENT'S REST TILL THAT THING IS DESTROYED!



A BEVY OF SCIENTISTS AND CITY OFFICIALS CLOSED IN ON ME...

MY GUESS IS THAT THE FIRES RESULT FROM THE FACT THAT IT'S ELECTRICALLY CHARGED!

ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THERE'S ANOTHER REASON? SUPPOSE THAT-- WELL, SUPPOSE THAT IT'S INNATELY DESTRUCTIVE--



NONSENSE! PETER PLASTIC CAN'T THINK--AND HAS NO FEELINGS! IT'S JUST A MECHANICAL OBJECT GONE AWAY!

HOW DO YOU KNOW? I SAY IT MAY ACTUALLY BE ALIVE--AND INCAPABLE OF REALIZING WHAT IT'S DOING! IT'S GOT TO BE DESTROYED!



THE GREATEST HUNT IN THE HISTORY OF THE CITY WAS SET IN MOTION-- BUT PETER COULD NOT BE SHARED! WITH NIGHTFALL, HOWEVER, IT'S GLOW GAVE IT AWAY AND AIR CORPS FIGHTER PLANES OPENED FIRE--



THIS IS LIKE SHOOTING AT A FLEA WITH A BOW AND ARROW!

FRANTIC DAYS PASSED-- AND STILL THE LITTLE MECHANICAL MAN ELUDED CAPTURE! AT HOME--

I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW IT HAPPENED! IS PETER A LIVING THING OR NOT? WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

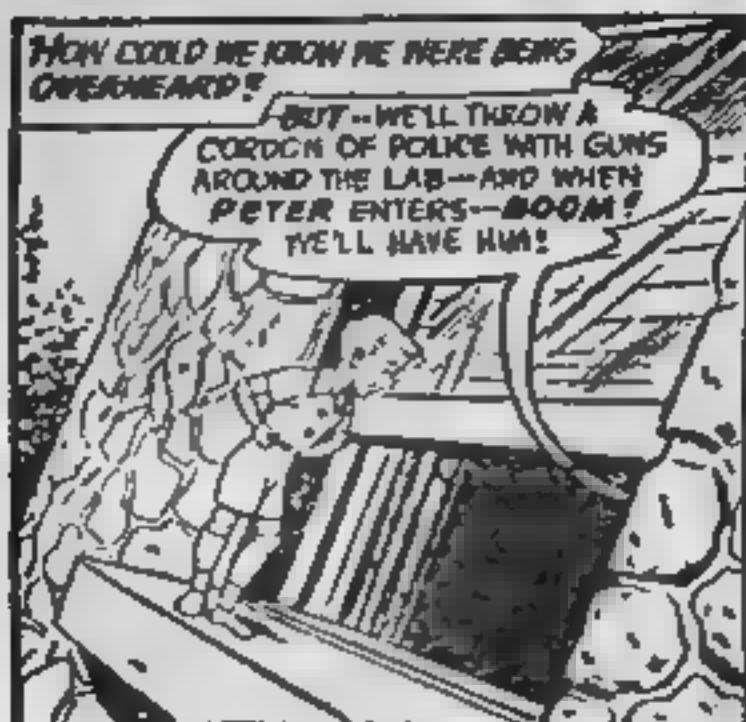


PETER! I STARED AT IT IN SILENCE, AND WHEN IT SPOKE-- I THOUGHT MY REASON MUST BE SNAPPING--

I WANT A FAVOR, ERIC-- AND I'LL DO YOU ONE IN RETURN!

IT--IT DOES HAVE INTELLIGENCE! IT REALLY IS ALIVE!







IT WAS ONLY A MILD SHOCK WE'D GOTTEN, BUT ENOUGH TO SHOW HOW TRULY DANGEROUS THIS TINY CREATURE WAS...

I WARNED YOU, ERIC... AND NOW I'LL SHOW YOU I MEAN BUSINESS!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?



IT ZOOMED OFF THROUGH THE WINDOW... AND THAT AFTERNOON, PETER CARRIED OUT HIS THREAT...

GREAT GUNS! THAT THING WAITED TILL EVERYONE WAS OFF... THEN MELTED THE BRIDGE CABLES!



WE CAN'T FOOL AROUND WITH THAT THING! BUILD A COMPANION! MAYBE THEN WE'LL BE RID OF IT!

YES, BUT CAN YOU TRUST IT?



IN THE FOLLOWING DAYS, WHILE I WORKED SLAVISHLY TO BUILD A DUPLICATE, I WRACKED MY BRAIN FOR A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM...

THESE THINGS POSE A REAL THREAT! HOW CAN I TRUST IN A PROMISE... FROM A THING WITH A PLASTIC CONSCIENCE?



NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, THE AIR CORPS PATROLLED THE SKIES, IN THE FORLORN HOPE THAT THEY MIGHT SHOOT PETER DOWN...

NO SIGN OF TARGET TONIGHT! GUESS IT'S GONE INTO HIDING!



AT LAST, THE DUPLICATE WAS COMPLETE... AND MY TORMENTOR VISITED ME AGAIN...

I CAN'T ACTIVATE IT, PETER! WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOU WAS A FREAK! I'VE DONE MY BEST... BUT IT WON'T WORK!

OH, NO? A THUNDERBOLT DID THE TRICK FOR ME! WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS...



PETER ISSUED CLIPPED ORDERS, NOW I'D HAVE TO BUILD AN ELECTRICAL APPARATUS AS POWERFUL AS LIGHTNING TO CHARGE THE DUPLICATE MODEL...

IS THAT CLEAR? IT SO HAPPENS I HAVE A BRAIN!

I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH OF A BRAIN!

ONLY AT GREAT COST WAS IT POSSIBLE TO BUILD SUFFICIENTLY POWERFUL ELECTRODES, BUT MY BOSS DIDN'T COMPLAIN...

NOW'S NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT MONEY! THE MAIN THING IS MAKING SOCIETY SAFE... AFTER ALL, IT'S OUR FAULT!

BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THEY'LL GO AWAY? THIS COULD BE DOUBLE TROUBLE!



PETER INSISTED ON ABSOLUTE PRIVACY WHEN THE WORK WAS COMPLETE! HE WERE ALONE IN THE LAB, LONG AFTER DARK...

WELL, EVERYTHING'S SET!

WAIT! I THINK I'LL TAKE A POSE OF THAT ELECTRICITY TOO!



IT WAS THEN I NOTICED HOW HIS GLOW WAS DIMINISHING...

I'VE BEEN RUNNING DOWN THE LAST TWO DAYS—I NEED ANOTHER SHOT OF ENERGY!

WAIT A MINUTE! IF YOU NEED IT NOW, YOU'LL NEED IT AGAIN—AND AGAIN...



I REALIZED THEN THAT PETER HAD BEEN LYING ABOUT GOING AWAY! HE'D NEED BOOSTER SHOTS CONSTANTLY...

DON'T TRY TO BACK OUT—IT MIGHT NOT BE WISE!

YOU LITTLE MONSTER! I'LL FIGURE OUT SOME WAY TO STOP YOU YET!



BUT RIGHT NOW HE WAS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT! I PULLED THE SWITCH—UNLEASHING AWFUL POWER...

AHHH! I FEEL STRENGTH RETURNING! AND LOOK—MY FRIEND IS STARTING TO MOVE!

CRACKLE!



THE ROOM WAS FILLED WITH THE DRIZZLE OF A THOUSAND THUNDERBOLTS! THE DUPLICATE WAS NOW STANDING—BUT A STRANGE LASSITUDE SEEMED TO GRIP THEM...

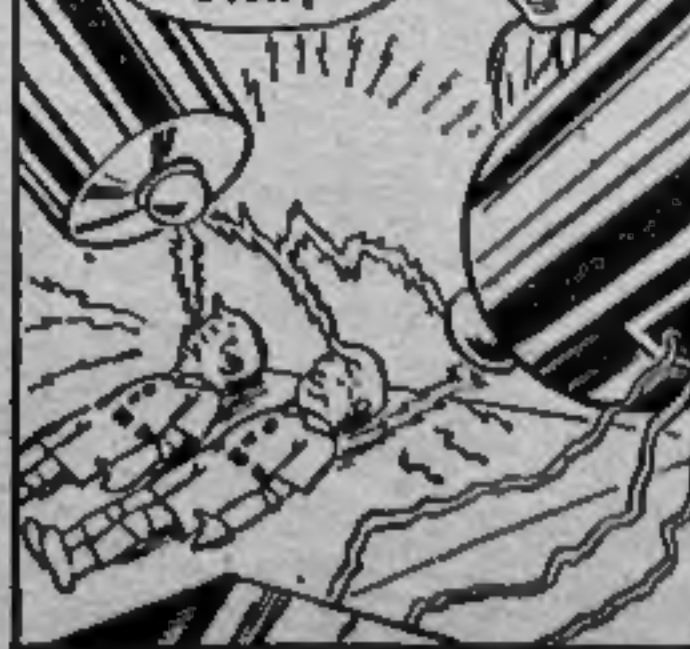
FUNNY—I FELT MY POWER GROWING... GROWING... BUT SOMETHING'S HAPPENED... GETTING... SO SLEEPY...

GREAT GUNS... COULD IT BE THAT POWER CAN GROW TOO GREAT—AND EFFECT A CHANGE WITHIN A PLASTIC FRAMEWORK? DO I... DARE HOPE?



DOWN STREAMED THE RELENTLESS CURRENT! DROWSILY, THE PUPPETS YAWPED, SANK TO THE TABLE TOP! AND AS THEIR EYES CLOSED IN SLEEP, I KNEW THAT THEY WERE RETURNING TO INANIMATE BEINGS THAT WOULD NEVER AGAIN ENDANGER HUMANKIND!

THANK HEAVENS! THE MENACE IS OVER!



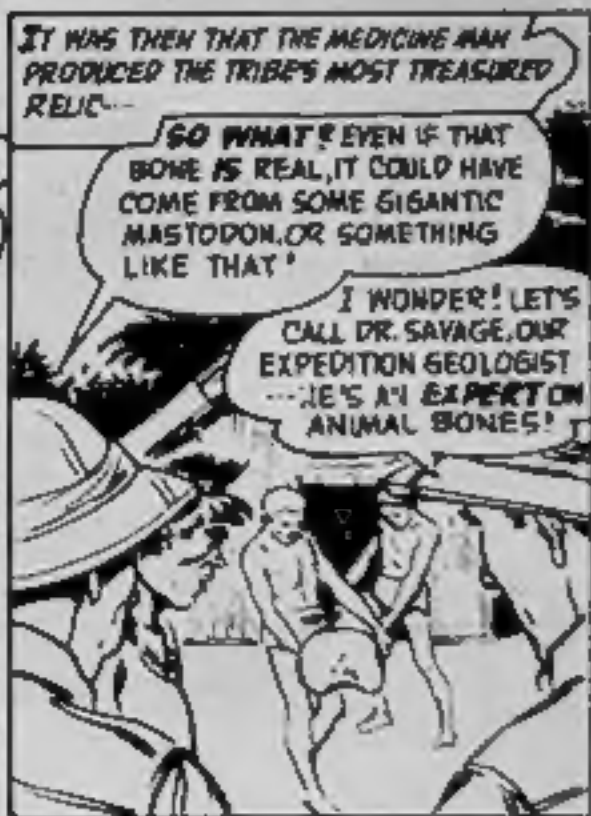
YES, THE MENACE WAS NO MORE—BUT IT HAD COST MY COMPANY MILLIONS! I WONDERED WHETHER WE COULD STAY IN BUSINESS...

STOP WORRYING! I'VE LOST MILLIONS, BUT GOT PUBLICITY WORTH BILLIONS! WE'LL SELL OUR PRODUCTS LIKE HOTBOXES—BUT REMEMBER, NO MORE PLASTIC MEN! WE'RE STICKING TO CHEMICAL SETS!



OUT of the UNKNOWN!

NO. 4...
MIGHTY APE

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